

# Return to Practice:

## A handbook for Nurses and Midwives



Office of the  
**Nursing & Midwifery**  
Services Director



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Tús Áite do  
Shábháilteacht 1 Othar  
Patient Safety **1** First



NURSING & MIDWIFERY  
QUALITY  
CARE-METRICS





## Introduction

The Department of Health welcomes you to the Health Service Executive (HSE) as a valuable member of the healthcare team.

The health service, as one of the largest employers in the country, is supporting nurses and midwives in returning to practice by providing educational programmes throughout the country to enable them to update their theoretical knowledge and clinical competence.

There may have been many changes since you last worked in the nursing or midwifery professions but the art of caring remains fundamental to the role of the nurse and midwife and is central in providing safe, accountable and quality patient/client centred care. The values of compassion, care and commitment are the very essence of nursing and midwifery practice and form the basis for professional decision making and actions (Chief Nursing Office, DoH 2016).

## **The journey back to nursing or midwifery**

The HSE welcomes the opportunity to provide you with the relevant information to assist and guide you when considering returning to nursing or midwifery practice in the health service.

The information and experiences of other nurses and midwives who have successfully returned to practice following an absence of five years or more may help influence your decision to return to work as a nurse or midwife in any of the following areas:

- General
- Psychiatry
- Intellectual Disability
- Care of the Older Person
- Children's Nursing
- Public Health Nursing
- Midwifery

## **The aims and objectives of the Return to Nursing & Midwifery Practice Programmes**

The aims of the Return to Nursing and Midwifery Practice programmes (RTNMP) are to enable and facilitate nurses and midwives to update and refresh their knowledge, skills and attitudes in current professional practice in order to provide a safe and competent standard of care.

The objectives are:

- To update your nursing and/or midwifery skills to enable you to deliver safe and effective nursing or midwifery care.
- To provide you with the relevant theoretical and clinical experience to develop your confidence and competence to return to nursing or midwifery practice.
- To provide you with a supportive network to facilitate collaborative learning with nurse or midwifery tutors and clinical staff.

## **Programme Duration**

The duration of the Return to Nursing programme is a minimum of six weeks full time.

The Return to Midwifery Programme is a minimum of six weeks and up to twelve weeks full time in duration.

The delivery of the programme on a full time/part time option is at the discretion of the programme providers at local level (NMBI 2015a – Return to Nursing Practice Courses Standards and Requirements, NMBI 2015b – Return to Midwifery Practice Courses Standards and Requirements).

## **Programme Structure**

Return to Nursing/Midwifery Practice programmes are provided to enable nurses/midwives returning to practice to update both their theoretical knowledge and clinical skills. The theoretical component of the programme is required to allow participants to develop the knowledge, understanding and professional skills necessary to assess, plan, implement and evaluate nursing/midwifery practice.

The clinical placement allows for purposeful and focused learning where the RTNMP candidate applies theoretical knowledge to nursing and/or midwifery practice and develops the integrated knowledge and skills essential to become confident, competent providers of nursing and midwifery care.

There are two models of delivery of the programmes: One where the theoretical component is delivered by the CNME and the clinical placement is facilitated in the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) approved clinical sites affiliated to the CNME delivering the theory.

The second model is where the theoretical component will be delivered centrally, and the clinical placement will be in a NMBI approved site appropriate to the area you wish to return to practice (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland 2015a). The second approach is known as a hub and spoke model.

## Máire's story

*'Having been out of nursing for almost 10 years after starting my family I was unsure if I would or even could return to the nursing profession. A return to nursing programme was always on the cards for me but as time passed by it seemed more and more unlikely and increasingly daunting! I researched how I could return and discovered there was a return to nursing practice programme running in a local hospital. I contacted the hospital and was invited to an information day for the course which I attended. It was very encouraging to see so many people in a similar situation to myself with the same worries, concerns and apprehensions as I.*

*Although nervous, I looked forward to my first day in May 2015. We were welcomed to the hospital and encouraged from the offset. The support structures and facilities were absolutely outstanding. Our six week timetable covered all aspects of nursing in a busy hospital. Many aspects of my early training were repeated but also more importantly more up to date practices and techniques were explained and practiced until I was deemed competent. The training was incremental and by the end of the course I was prepared, confident and competent to work within my scope of practice and be able to undertake the duties of a staff nurse without any hesitation.*

*Having completed the programme I sat for interview and was offered a position in the organization where I am very lucky to be part of an incredible team of nurses. I am still supported and encouraged in my learning and look forward to continuing my professional development during my nursing career. The return to nursing programme was absolutely invaluable in the process of making the transition from being a stay at home mom to now staff nurse."*



## **Return to Nursing Practice Programmes are divided into two sections:**

### **Part 1 Theory**

The programme content will reflect the Division of the Register of Nursing in which you are currently registered i.e. General Nursing, Children's Nursing, Intellectual Disability, Public Health or Psychiatric Nursing.

Part 1 of the programme covers the area of theoretical instruction and involves a review of the following areas and will contribute to a minimum of one third of the programme (up to 10-12 days classroom based).

- The Art and Science of Nursing
- Professional, Ethical and Legal issues
- Research appreciation and evidence based practice
- Clinical skills

## **Part 2 Clinical**

Part 2 of the Programme is spent in the clinical area where there are established mechanisms for supporting learners. Nurses undertaking the Return to Nursing Practice (RTNP) Programme have supernumerary status for the full duration of the programme. The RTNP candidate is in addition to the rostered complement of registered nurses. RTNP candidates actively participate in provision of care under the supervision and guidance of a registered nurse. The clinical placement shall be in a hospital/clinical location reflective of the Division in which you are registered with The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland.

The clinical placement will be supported and supervised by registered nurses with clinical practice experience and educational preparation that will enable them to undertake their supporting role. The preceptorship skills of these nurses will support you to accomplish your placement goals and achieve competence. During the clinical placement you will be continually assessed to assist you in achieving competence in this area within the allocated time.

Competence is defined as the ability of the registered nurse/midwife to practice safely and effectively fulfilling his/her professional responsibility within her/his scope of practice (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland 2015c). The framework for assessing competency development is based on a competency assessment tool to enable the assessment to be conducted in a structured manner. Additional time in the clinical area may be provided if required to enable you to become a confident and competent practitioner.

## Sean's story

*I am an Intellectual disabilities nurse (R.N.I.D) I worked in a residential centre for people with an intellectual disability for three years after qualification. I had been out of nursing practice for 13 years when I decided I would like to return to work. As I had been inactive for such a long time I felt I would need some support to return to practice I needed to refresh my skill set (13 years is a long time away from a profession that is constantly evolving). A former colleague told me about an upcoming return to nursing practice programme. I decided to apply and that started the re introduction to my career in nursing.*

*I began the programme with a sense of trepidation. The other participants were all feeling similarly and had also been away from practice for various lengths of time. We all shared a common goal: to return to a profession we had previously enjoyed.*

*I found the programme very interesting. The lectures were intense, but well structured informative and current. The nurse tutors were excellent. They made themselves available to the group throughout the programme. They were eager to boost our knowledge, skills and confidence. As part of the programme I also undertook a 4 week competency based clinical placement, in a centre for older people with an intellectual disability and mental health needs. I really enjoyed the placement and was well supported by the nursing staff in the centre. I worked in a supernumerary capacity but I was made feel like one of the team and I was eager to get involved. I had a list of objectives for myself and felt fulfilled each time one was achieved.*

*I am currently employed full time in an ID service. The programme gave me the confidence and skills that I needed to return to practice.*

## **Return to Midwifery Practice Programmes are divided into two sections:**

### **Part 1** Theory

The theoretical component of the programme aims to allow participants to acquire the theoretical knowledge and understanding to underpin clinical midwifery practice. Midwifery theory will enable you to reflect the core midwifery competencies essential to practice as a competent midwife.

Part 1 of the programme covers the area of theoretical instruction and involves a review of the following areas and will contribute to a minimum of one third of the programme

- Midwifery knowledge base for clinical practice
- Professional, Ethical and Legal issues
- Research appreciation and evidence based practice
- Clinical skills
- Midwifery Theory

## **Part 2 Clinical**

Part 2 of the programme is spent in the clinical area where there are established mechanisms for supporting learners. Midwives undertaking the Return to Midwifery Practice (RTMP) Programme have supernumerary status for the full duration of the programme. The RTMP candidate is in addition to the rostered complement of registered midwives. RTMP candidates actively participate in provision of care under the supervision and guidance of a registered midwife. The aim of clinical practice learning is to enable the midwife to develop competence and become a safe, caring, decision maker willing to accept personal and professional accountability for practice.

The clinical placement will be supported and supervised by registered midwives with clinical practice experience and educational preparation that will enable them to undertake their supporting role. During the clinical placement you will be continually assessed to assist you in achieving competence in this area.

Competence is defined as the ability of the registered nurse/midwife to practice safely and effectively fulfilling his/her professional responsibility within her/his scope of practice (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland 2015c). The framework for assessing competency development is based on a competency assessment tool to enable the assessment to be conducted in a structured manner. Additional time in the clinical area may be provided if required to enable you to become a confident and competent practitioner.

## Daniela' story

*Returning to midwifery was a decision I considered very carefully. I had trained as a direct entry midwife in the UK 10 years previously and had relocated to Ireland to raise my family. After a ten year absence from the profession I was committed to return, but naturally had many apprehensions regarding the theoretical and clinical requirements of a Return to Midwifery Programme. In April 2016 I completed a 12 week Return to Midwifery Practice programme.*

*The theoretical component of the programme was structured in an informative and logical manner and I thoroughly enjoy researching and composing assignments. The tutors were amazing; always going above and beyond to ensure learning objectives were achieved and were always available to talk things through when any issues arose. The time and commitment given from clinical staff was exemplary. They were always willing to guide and teach whilst ensuring I felt a valuable member of the team. They encouraged and inspired me to explore and develop my practice and allowed me to shape and inform my own personal midwifery skills and knowledge in a safe and supportive environment.*

*Undertaking the Return to Midwifery programme has been the most incredible and worthwhile experience for me. Committing to such a programme requires dedication and commitment, however the rewards are invaluable as I have returned to a profession for which I am enthusiastic, passionate and genuinely love.*

*At present I am fortunate to have secured a full time position as a midwife within the HSE, where every day I am learning and developing myself personally and professionally and exploring career pathways."*



## **Want to Know More?**

If you are interested in finding out more about Return to Practice programmes, please contact Lorna Byrne at [lorna.byrne1@hse.ie](mailto:lorna.byrne1@hse.ie) or [returntonursing@hse.ie](mailto:returntonursing@hse.ie) or at 01 8131810. You will also find useful information at [www.hse.ie/returntopractice](http://www.hse.ie/returntopractice).

Alternatively you can contact your local CNME (contact details are included in this booklet).

## **Entry Requirements**

You must be on the Active Register or eligible to be on the Active Register held by NMBI. NMBI may specifically recommend that a person undertake the RTNP/RTMP programme. Registration may be verified by the CNME Programme Coordinator prior to commencement of the programme (NMBI, 2015a p6, NMBI 2015b p5). If you are not registered, please contact NMBI to initiate the process at 01 6398562 or [registration@NMBI.ie](mailto:registration@NMBI.ie)

## **Selection Process**

Applicants will be invited to attend an interview in your local Centre of Nursing and Midwifery Education.

## **Occupational Health Screening**

Each nurse/midwife undertaking a Return to Practice Programme will be required to undergo a health assessment process.

## **Garda Vetting**

Each nurse/midwife undertaking a Return to Practice Programme will be required to undergo the national Garda vetting process.

## **Financial Support**

The Health Service Executive provides limited financial support with terms and conditions for individuals undertaking Return to Nursing and Midwifery Practice programmes.

## **Career Opportunities**

It is advisable, whilst on clinical placement, during the return to nurse/midwifery programme to follow up employment opportunities. Plan ahead and seek an interview in order to secure employment in your preferred area. You may seek support and guidance in preparing for this process from the coordinator of the Return to Nursing/ Midwifery Practice programme.

## **Educational opportunities**

Continuing professional development (CPD) encompasses experiences, activities and processes that contribute towards the development of a nurse or midwife as a health care professional. CPD is, therefore, a lifelong process of both structured and informal learning (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland 2015b). There are many educational opportunities available when you return to nursing and midwifery practice.

## **Work Life balance**

The Health Service promotes work-life balance initiatives. It is a family friendly organisation with opportunities for flexible working in line with service need.

## **Centres for Nursing and Midwifery Education**

Centre of Nursing and Midwifery Education,  
University Hospital Galway,  
Newcastle Road, Galway  
091 544351 / 544362

Regional Centre of Nurse Education,  
Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown,  
Dublin 15  
01 6465459

Centre of Nurse & Midwifery Education Mayo/  
Roscommon, St Mary's Campus,  
Westport Road,  
Castlebar, Co Mayo  
094 9042074

Centre for Nurse and Midwifery Education,  
St. Conal's Hospital Campus,  
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal  
074 9188851

Regional Centre of Nursing & Midwifery  
Education, Midland Regional Hospital,  
Tullamore, Co. Offaly  
057 9358752

Centre of Midwifery Education,  
Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital,  
Cork Street, Dublin 8  
01 4085261

Centre of Nursing and Midwifery Education,  
Mid-Western Regional General Hospital,  
Dooradoyle, Limerick  
/Or Centre of Nurse and Midwifery Education,  
Mid-Western Regional Maternity Hospital,  
Ennis Road, Limerick  
061 483162 / 482184 / 482967

Centre of Nurse Education,  
Mercy University Hospital,  
Grenville Place, Cork  
021 4935183

Regional Centre of Nursing & Midwifery  
Education, HSE South  
(Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary,  
Waterford, Wexford)  
051 842007

Centre for Nurse Education,  
Mater Misericordiae University Hospital,  
Nelson Street, Dublin 7  
01 8032226 / 2105 / 2716

Centre of Nurse Education,  
Beaumont Hospital,  
Beaumont, Dublin 9  
01 8092864 / 8092131

Kerry Centre of Nurse Education,  
Kerry University Hospital,  
Tralee, Co. Kerry  
066 7184440

Centre of Nursing and Midwifery  
Education Sligo/Leitrim and West Cavan,  
Health Service Executive - West,  
Cregg, Rossespoint, Co Sligo  
071 9177090 / 77748

Centre of Nurse Education,  
Cork University Hospital,  
Wilton, Cork  
021 4928037

Centre of Midwifery Education,  
5th Floor,  
Cork University Maternity Hospital,  
Wilton, Cork  
021 4920733

Centre for Learning and Development,  
St. James's Hospital, Dublin 8  
01 4162200 / 1

Centre of Learning and Development,  
Tallaght Hospital, Dublin 24  
01 4143170 / 4142857

Regional Centre for Nursing and Midwifery Education,  
St Brigid's Hospital, Ardee, Co Louth  
047 95383 / 6850679

Centre for Children's Nurse Education,  
Our Lady's Children's Hospital,  
Crumlin, Dublin 12  
01 4096366 / 01 4096367

Centre of Nurse Education,  
St Vincent's University Hospital,  
Elm Park, Dublin 4  
01 2214000

## **Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Units**

### **NMPDU Cork/Kerry**

Administration Building,  
St Mary's Health Campus,  
Gurranabraher,  
Cork  
021 4921205

### **NMPDU North East**

St Brigid's Hospital,  
Ardee, Co Louth  
041 6853206

### **NMPDU North West**

Iona House, Main Street,  
Ballyshannon, Co Donegal  
071 9822106

### **NMPDU South East**

Office Complex,  
Kilcreene Hospital Grounds, Kilkenny  
056 7785620



**NMPDU West/Mid West**

Merlin Park Regional Hospital,  
Galway, Co Galway  
091 775841

**NMPDU Dublin North**

Swords, Business Complex,  
Balheary Road, Swords, Co Dublin  
01 8908765

**NMPDU Midlands**

Scott Building,  
Midlands Regional Building,  
Tullamore, Co Offaly  
057 9357868

**NMPDU Dublin South Kildare and Wicklow**

HSE Offices, Mill Lane,  
Palmerstown, Dublin 20  
01 620177

## References

Department of Health (2016) Position Paper One: Values for Nurses and Midwives in Ireland Department of Health: Dublin. (Available at: <http://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Final-position-paper-PDF.pdf>).

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (2015a) Return to Nursing Practice Courses Standards and Requirements. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland: Dublin.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (2015b) Return to Midwifery Practice Courses Standards and Requirements The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland: Dublin.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (2015c) Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Framework. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland: Dublin.





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