

Career Journey

I started my nurse training in 1981 which makes me feel very old! I remember we were one of the first groups to be called RGN instead of the old term SRN. I trained at the Queen Elizabeth School of Nursing in Edgbaston and was exposed to all branches of nursing. Our training took us across most of the hospitals in Birmingham including The Birmingham Children's Hospital, The Midland Nerve Hospital at Five Ways and The Women's Hospital in Sparkbrook. We moved around every 8 weeks to a new placement and I loved every minute of it! I qualified in 1984 and was fortunate to get a job on a medical ward at the General Hospital Birmingham on permanent nights.

I had loved my community placement as a student and decided I wanted to be a Health Visitor but in those days you had to be a midwife to apply for health visitor training so in 1986 I qualified as a midwife at Solihull Hospital. I worked on the Special Care Baby Unit and then had my first son so continued part time and health visiting was put on hold. I was then introduced to practice nursing through a local practice nurse and having completed the ENB 901 family planning course I obtained my first post at Parkfield Medical Centre in Castle Bromwich. I learnt on the job and being the only practice nurse at one of the sites it was quite lonesome and daunting at times. I loved the variety and particularly the focus on health promotion. I then moved to a large practice in Sutton Coldfield which was great but I was becoming increasingly frustrated with the difficulties in getting access to further training and education. Therefore in 1995 I moved to a single handed practice in Kingstanding where I stayed for over 15 years! The GP there was very supportive and encouraged me to apply for funding and access to training. I completed a Nurse Practitioner Diploma and the Specialist Practice GPN degree at Wolverhampton University and chronic disease diplomas. I loved the variety and undertook all the core practice nurse duties as well as chronic disease management and developing a role in minor illness. Life was one long round of studying but it meant my role in the practice grew and in 2002 I became one of the first nurse prescribers which was I think the course which most radically changed my practice. In 2003 I started the Advanced Practice MSc programme and then moved to a practice in Lichfield where there were 4 ANP's one of whom was a nurse partner in the practice. In 2009 I took up a post as lecturer/ practitioner doing 3 days at university and 2 in the GP practice.

My favourite aspects of working in general practice are the variety and that I could get to know the patients and their families over many years. I undertook home visits as well and worked closely with the local nursing and residential homes. There are so many opportunities to carve out a unique role as a practice nurse and also to be involved in the running of the practice and teaching of nurses and medical students. It is a great job and my role now is a great opportunity to support nurses to develop a career in general practice and to make education and training as accessible to practice nurses as it is for nurses in other settings.

