

Returning to practice



The Centre for Education and Development hosted a very successful introductory session, on the 13th June, for dietitians returning to practice and who are starting the BDA Re-entrants Programme. Thirteen returners attended the day.



The day was facilitated by Julie Farmer, Policy Officer – Education; Najia Qureshi, Policy Officer – Professional Practice explored the statutory requirements of dietitians and the HPC; and Ingrid Darnley, Policy Officer for Clinical Quality, delivered a session on record keeping, outcomes and risk. Emma Williams, Clinical Lead in Dietetics at The University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, delivered a session on ‘Dietetics in the NHS Today’.

Julie Farmer, Policy Officer – Education, reflects on the day: ‘It was a pleasure to facilitate the Re-entrants Introductory Day, meeting people who are passionate about returning to dietetics and who bring with them a variety of knowledge, skills and life experiences. One of the main benefits of the event is to provide an opportunity for delegates to meet one another and to build a supportive network. To participate in the programme each delegate requires a facilitator to support them in undertaking the practical aspects of the programme and we are very grateful to dietitians

who take on this role. More facilitators are needed and if you are interested in finding out more please email Karen Leek at k.leek@bda.uk.com. May I take this opportunity to wish everyone who is undertaking the Re-entrants Programme every success.’

Why become a facilitator?

A facilitator is a dietitian who acts as a point of contact for the participant throughout the re-entrants programme. Re-entrants carry out a mix of theory and practical exercises in the workplace according to the directed activities within each of the programme modules.

Re-entrants to the profession can bring life skills and a variety of other knowledge and skills from other jobs that could be useful to your dietetic department. They can also be a source of future staffing for dietetic departments.

Undertaking the role of facilitator is an excellent CPD opportunity and all facilitators are supported by the BDA and can contact the Education and Professional Development team for advice and support.

Sue Allman on re-entering dietetics

Sue Allman, a participant on the BDA Re-entrants Programme describes her experience since returning to the profession.

‘Two years ago, after a long break from the profession, I was asked to write about my experience of retraining as a dietitian. Recently I have been asked to describe my experience after returning to clinical practice.

In 2009, after twenty years outside the profession, I decided to return to dietetics. I attended the BDA introductory seminar, which was an informative and interesting day. Then, as I intended to return to clinical work, I needed to find a hospital where I could gain practical experience. I approached the head of the dietetic department at our local hospital who kindly agreed to be my facilitator. There are many ways of proving your proficiency but I chose to do the BDA Re-entrants Programme, as it seemed to be a well-structured route to updating my clinical knowledge. I found the programme excellent, thoughtfully constructed and very relevant to current clinical practice.

Having completed my retraining the next step was to find a job. I didn’t want to move or travel too far from Herefordshire, and so this meant that my options were quite limited. However, I was very flexible in other ways - my own children had grown up and left home and I was happy to gain experience in fields other than paediatrics, which was my area of expertise before leaving

the NHS in 1989. My aim was to gain as much experience in as many different areas in order to give me an idea of what I would like to do in the future. I was pretty sure I wanted to stay in clinical dietetics and to spend as much time with patients as possible. A management job was not on my agenda.

So far, I have been very lucky to have found work in Hereford, firstly on ‘the bank’ and later doing maternity cover for three people. In the past year I have had experience in diabetes, nutrition support, medical and surgical conditions and ITU. I have also gained professional privileges at our local private hospital and do some ad hoc work helping people who have nutritional issues as a consequence of industrial or road traffic accidents. There have certainly been a lot of changes in dietetics (and the NHS) since 1989. The impending budget cuts in the NHS mean that we have to make imaginative use of our resources and concentrate on what we do best. Dietitians have become more specialised and more autonomous. They certainly have a higher profile than when I first qualified and seem to have become a more respected profession.

I would encourage anybody who is considering returning to dietetics to contact the BDA office and enrol on the BDA Re-entrants Programme Introductory Seminar. They may be surprised at how much they enjoy it. **dt**

Feedback about the programme

“Very positive and encouraging course. Feel inspired and proud to be a dietitian still”

“Just wanted to say thank you so much for a really interesting day. I feel that I learnt a lot and it was lovely to meet other ‘re-entrants’ and to know that the BDA team is so approachable”.

“I really enjoyed the course yesterday. It was good to meet others in the same position as myself. It was also very comforting to know I can contact the BDA about any problems or queries I have concerning, not only the course, but also any area of dietetics”.