



University Hospitals
of North Midlands
NHS Trust

Meet the apprentice

We are introducing to you **Claire Riley**, a Nursing Associate apprentice at University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust.



How did you get your
apprenticeship?

I had always wanted to be a Nurse, but I never thought I would be able to take the time out of work to study full-time. I was made redundant from an Energy Company in 2015 and as my children were growing up, I decided it was time to do something for me. I had no professional care experience, but I had helped my family to care for an older relative. Whilst in Hospital, I felt a great appreciation to some of the Health Care Nurses and Doctors we met, and wanted to give something back in whatever capacity I could.



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Initially, I worked in the Image Transfers department and although I enjoyed my role, I quickly found that I wanted more contact with patients. I moved to a reception desk by Interventional Radiology and from there became fascinated with the department. I used my annual leave to spend some time within the department and when a job became available, I applied for it. I worked as a Health Care Support Worker within Interventional Radiology for three years. I completed my Care Certificate and also managed to complete my Clinical Healthcare Support Level 2 NVQ as an apprentice. I then began to look for more opportunities to progress. I found myself wanting to do more to help the Nurses, Radiographers and Consultant Radiologists, enabling them to provide the very best care to their patients. My NVQ college lecturer emailed me about a new opportunity, I contacted the Care Coaches and learned of the Trainee Nursing Associate Apprenticeship. I had a meeting with my Nurse Manager and Imaging Matron and they agreed to support my application. I was successful and obtained my place in the first cohort of the UHNM.

2

Who is your training provider and what is the study model like?

I study at the Staffordshire University Stoke Campus. I am at University one day a week and also have 7.5 hours protected learning time. I continue to work in my base and also have placements which were arranged by my Nurse Manager, Matron and University.

3

What types of things have you been doing in your off-the-job learning?

During my first year, I had 9 external work placements and managed to visit many different areas which had some correlation with my base department. I have experienced many different situations and feel my knowledge base is expanding every day, I still have a long way to go but the more I learn the more I can put things into context. It's easy to look at an individual and just focus on the singular reason they have visited your department and throughout my training I am coming to see the bigger picture. I look at a patient holistically and try to take all elements into consideration when caring for them and their families.

4

What has been the hardest part?

Honestly being an adult and going back into study is hard, I knew it would be, it has been a long time since I have done any formal study, but it is still hard, to be a wife, mum, work full-time and also put 100% into my studies. It has taken some time to adjust and to accept that I cannot do everything all of the time, but once you organise yourself and structure your time it is manageable. It is hard and that is reinforced with moving into my second year, where the workload and expectations have increased.

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What has been the best part?

I have never been particularly academic, and I never thought I would go to university. But now considering I have come from an Administration background I will be a Registered Nursing Associate at the end of the apprenticeship, something I thought would never be possible. I can see changes in myself and others have also commented that they too can see me changing both personally and professionally. I have more confidence in myself and I feel that I can care for my patients better. My time management has improved, and I am actually enjoying pushing myself to see what I can achieve.

6

What do you hope to do next?

I am focusing on my next assignment, but ultimately finishing my foundation degree and then seeing where the role takes me. There is a potential opportunity to continue my learning to become a Registered Nurse, but I think I will try to settle into the Nursing Associate Role first and then see where life takes me. But never say never.

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What tips do you have for people who want to do the same apprenticeship as you?

Think carefully about the level of commitment you are willing or able to make. The apprenticeship so far has been very rewarding, but it has been hard. You need a good support network of friends and family and also a commitment from your base work area.