



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

# RETURN to Practice

A Handbook for Nurses and Midwives





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## Introduction

The Department of Health and Children welcomes you to the Health Service Executive (HSE) as a valuable member of the healthcare team. There may have been many changes since you last worked in the nursing or midwifery profession but the art of caring remains fundamental to the role of the nurse and midwife and is central in providing quality patient/client centred care.

Nurses and midwives comprise 36% of the overall staffing of the Irish health service. The health service, as one of the largest employers in the country is supporting nurses and midwives in their return to practice by providing educational programmes throughout the country to enable them to update their theoretical and clinical experience. Financial

assistance will also be provided.

The aims of the Return to Nursing and Midwifery Practice programmes 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.

This handbook details the information needed to return to practice and will be of assistance when you are considering returning to nursing or midwifery practice. The information and profiles may enlighten you about other nurses and midwives who have successfully returned to practice. Their experiences may help influence your decision to return to work as a nurse or midwife in any of the following areas;

- Acute services
- Community
- Psychiatry
- Paediatrics
- Intellectual disability
- Midwifery
- Care of the Older person
- Public Health Nursing

## The journey back to nursing or midwifery

The HSE welcomes the opportunity to present the return to nursing and midwifery handbook. This handbook provides you with the relevant information to assist and guide you when considering returning to nursing or midwifery practice in the public health service.

### Where do I start!

#### Initial point of contact

Contact the centre where Return to Nursing/Midwifery Practice Programmes are provided in your area.

(See page 14/15 for locations and telephone numbers)



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

### The objectives of the Return to Nursing & Midwifery Practice Programmes are:

- To update your nursing/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 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.

### Course Duration

The course may be delivered as a full-time or a part-time programme. The minimum duration for the return to nursing practice programme is six weeks full-time and twelve weeks part-time. The return to midwifery practice programme is currently four to eight weeks. The delivery of the programme as a full-time/part-time option is at the discretion of the course providers at local level.

### Course Structure

Return to Nursing/Midwifery Practice programmes are provided to enable nurses/midwives returning to practice to update both their knowledge and their

clinical skills. The theoretical component of the course is required to allow participants to acquire the knowledge, understanding and professional skills necessary to assess, plan, implement and evaluate nursing/midwifery practice. The clinical component will allow the nurse/midwife to build on the acquired knowledge and skills and provide nursing/midwifery care as a member of the multidisciplinary team in the health care setting. The theoretical component will be delivered centrally, and your clinical placement will be in a setting appropriate to the area you wish to return to practice.

The course will provide you with learning opportunities that will support you in achieving competencies in clinical practice.

At each centre providing return to practice programmes Registered Nursing/Midwifery Tutors prepare programmes to enable nurses and midwives to return to practice.

### Rosemary's story

I left nursing with four years experience as a staff nurse and five years as a clinical teacher. The challenge for me was if I could return after a break of nearly twenty years. I contacted the helpline and was told that it was possible, and advice was given to me on return to nursing practice courses.

It was great to meet other nurses like myself on the course who shared my fears and apprehensions. I found the course exhausting, as I was not used to attending lectures all day or the length of time on my feet on the wards. There was no time wasted on the course and all information imparted was needed. I must say that I preferred the ward placements rather than the classroom. However, I really enjoyed the talk given to us by a previous back to practice nurse. I received great encouragement from her and she also pointed out the many career and educational opportunities which exist now in nursing.

I am back nursing three and a half years now. I am working as a Staff Nurse in a teaching hospital on a part time basis. I went to Trinity College in 2001 to do an access course for a degree in nursing and received my Bachelor of Nursing Studies in 2003.

I have received great support from all grades of staff in the hospital and from my Tutors while at college. I am not sure if I will do further study, but I do know, that I am glad to be back nursing and that I made that telephone call.

Rosemary undertook a return to practice course in the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital in 2001.

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

- Part 1: Theory
- Part 2: Clinical

### Part 1

Part 1 of the course 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 course.

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

#### Nursing 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 or Psychiatric Nursing.

### Part 2

Part 2 of the course is spent in the clinical area where there are established mechanisms for supporting learners. You are supernumerary in the clinical area while attending the programme. Being ‘supernumerary’ means working

alongside a competent practitioner observing and participating in care until you are competent. Your clinical placement shall be in a hospital/clinical location reflective of the Division in which you are registered with An Bord Altranais.

The clinical placement will have nursing staff experienced with working in a learning environment. The preceptorship skills of these nurses will support you to accomplish your placement goals and achieve competence.

Competence is defined as the ability of the registered nurse/midwife to practice safely and effectively fulfilling her/his professional responsibility within her/his scope of practice (An Bord Altranais, 2000).

Additional supported time in the clinical area may be provided to enable you to become a confident and competent provider of nursing care if required. During the clinical placement you will be continually assessed to assist you in achieving competence. A competency assessment tool is provided for participants to enable the assessment to be conducted in a structured manner.

### Brenda’s story

“ Having been away from direct nursing care for 8 years I decided that it was time to try to re-enter the hub of hospital life. I commenced a back to nursing course in Our Lady’s Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin in November 1998. This was a 6-week programme, which I found invaluable. Although apprehensive at returning to study and being in the classroom, I found to my surprise that it was not that difficult once you get into it. There was great support from colleagues who had ventured down the same road. Coffee breaks were full of chat and discussions on what we had learnt and sharing knowledge. In my previous life I had been a staff nurse in the Intensive Care Unit in the hospital. Much against my better judgement I was persuaded to do my ward allocation in the Intensive Care Unit. The staff there were so helpful and encouraging that I soon came to realise that this was where I really wanted to be.

Following completion of the Return to Nursing course I applied for a staff nurse’s post in Intensive Care Unit. I commenced job sharing in January 1999 and continue nursing to this day.

In 2001, I successfully completed a Diploma in Paediatric Critical Care and successfully completed the Diploma in Management in 2004. It has been an exciting and challenging 6 years but well worth while. I would encourage anyone to come back to nursing and although daunting it is very rewarding.

Brenda undertook a return to practice course in Our Lady’s Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin in 1998.

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

- Part 1: Theory
- Part 2: Clinical

### Part 1

Part 1 of the course 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 course.

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

#### Midwifery Theory

The theoretical component of the programme aims to allow participants to acquire the 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 2

Part 2 of the course is spent in the clinical area where there are established mechanisms for supporting learners. You are supernumerary in the clinical area while attending the programme. 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. Additional supported time in the clinical area may be required by individual participants to facilitate the achievement of competence and this can be negotiated at local level. During the clinical placement you will be continually assessed to assist you in achieving competence in this area.

A competency assessment tool is provided for participants to enable the assessment to be conducted in a structured manner.



## Laura's story



I returned to midwifery following an eight year absence. I had completed a return to nursing course and worked part time initially and then full time for five years. When the opportunity arose to complete a return to midwifery practice course, I was delighted as midwifery is my first love.

The thought of returning to midwifery was daunting at first but I received tremendous support from the midwives, tutors and from management. Everybody in the hospital had a very positive attitude and were very supportive to the midwives on the course. I had worries and concerns at the beginning but after a few months these faded away as I gained more confidence and competence in clinical practice. Now I feel like I never left.

I have been working full time for the past two years as a midwife in a busy maternity hospital. I am delighted that I returned to midwifery.”



Laura undertook a return to Midwifery course in 2002 in St Munchin's Regional Maternity Hospital in Limerick.



## What is required?

### Informal Enquiries

If you would like to speak with someone regarding returning to practice, please call your local Centre of Nurse Education. (See list of Centres on pages 14, 15 & 16)

Tetanus and TB prior to your clinical placement. You will be sent this questionnaire prior to your commencement on the programme.

### Registration

You must be a nurse or midwife on the active register held by An Bord Altranais. If you are not registered, please contact An Bord Altranais to initiate the process. (Telephone Number 01 639 8500)

### Garda Clearance

It is necessary to obtain Garda clearance for all nursing and midwifery grades who are involved in direct care to patients/clients. This process may take up to 12 weeks. An 'enquiry form' will be sent out with the application form for return to practice and both should be completed and returned to the centre providing the programme. The centre will send the completed enquiry form to the Human Resource Department to be processed by them. You will be requested to submit data on your name, address, date of birth, P.P.S Number, place of birth, current and previous addresses. This form will authorise the Garda to submit information to your potential employer on any previous convictions that are on their records.

### Application

Contact the Centre providing the return to nursing or midwifery practice programme, obtain an application form, complete and submit it to the Centre you wish to attend. (See list of Centres on pages 14, 15 & 16)

### Selection process

You may be invited to attend a selection process depending on local arrangements.

### Occupational Health Screening

Each nurse/midwife undertaking a return to practice programme will be required to complete a health assessment questionnaire. The completed questionnaire must be returned in a sealed envelope for the attention of the Occupational Health Physician. You are required to have up-to-date Immunisation cover for Hepatitis B,

## Financial Support

The Health Service Executive provides financial support for individuals undertaking Return to Nursing and Midwifery Practice programmes. A bursary of the sum of €1500 will be given to participants during the Return to Practice programme. Once participants have secured employment in the public health sector a further bursary of €1500 will be given, provided candidates give a commitment to remain in the public health service for a minimum of one year. Salaries on return to the workforce

will reflect validated nursing/midwifery experience for incremental purposes. Participation in Return to Nursing and Midwifery Practice Programmes is not reckonable for superannuation purposes. All salaries in the public sector are those agreed by the Department of Health and Children and are linked to national pay agreements. For further information on current salary scales please log on to the Department of Health and Children website at [www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)

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## What happens next?

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

### Career opportunities

In 1998, the Commission on Nursing report approved by the Government made recommendations to the Minister for Health and Children, which included the enhancement of career prospects for nurses and midwives. Recent years have seen the linking of nursing/midwifery education to higher education centres

and the subsequent introduction of the Degree in Nursing Programme in the disciplines of general nursing, intellectual disability and psychiatric nursing. Postgraduate diplomas are being offered in Schools of Midwifery and Paediatrics and plans are at an advanced stage to introduce primary degree programmes for Midwifery and Children's Nursing.

There are numerous specialist education programmes including emergency care, intensive care, care of older people, oncology, rehabilitation and a range of areas of generalist nursing practice programmes available.

The introduction of clinical nurse/ midwife specialist and advanced nurse/ midwife practitioner roles, incorporating nurse and midwife-led services have promoted clinical nursing/midwifery career pathways.

Professional clinical nurse/midwifery management has benefited from the introduction of a new structure of nursing/midwifery management grades. Further opportunities supporting the strategic development of clinical nursing and midwifery have been offered through the Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Units (NMPDU's) and The National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery (NCNM). Many nurses/ midwives have also utilised their clinical, organisational and management skills in general management areas including risk management, clinical audit, accreditation and project management.

### Educational opportunities

The nursing/midwifery educational pathways provide a structure that allows a nurse/midwife to choose from a variety of academic awards, from Diploma to Masters.

A framework to support nurses/ midwives in the expansion of their scope of practice was developed by An Bord Altranais in 2000. It is a framework to ensure that identified individual learning and development needs are

met in line with organisational needs, in the promotion and support of career pathways in nursing/midwifery. (See An Bord Altranais website)

### Flexible working

The Health Service Executive promotes work-life balance initiatives. It is also a family friendly organisation with opportunities for flexible working in line with service needs but at the same time making every effort to facilitate each individual's needs.

### State Enrolled Nurses

There is also support available for Nurses who possess the State Enrolled Nurse (SEN) qualification from the United Kingdom to undertake the conversion course to become a Registered Nurse. Please contact your local Nursing & Midwifery Planning and Development Unit for further details. (See page 16 for locations and telephone numbers)

## Centres currently providing Return to Nursing Practice Programmes (General, Psychiatry and Intellectual Disability)

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, Dublin 7. tel: 01 8032389

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
Adelaide & Meath Hospital incorporating  
the National Children’s Hospital, Tallaght, Dublin 24. tel: 01 4142858

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
St Vincent’s University Hospital, Dublin 4. tel: 01 2094873

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
St Ita’s Hospital, Portrane, Co. Dublin. Intellectual Disability Service. tel: 01 8436337

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. tel: 01 6465455

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
University College Hospital Galway. tel: 091 544416-544362

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
St Mary’s Hospital, Castlebar, Co. Mayo. tel: 094 9042054

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. tel: 090 9648200 ext. 588/538

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Limerick. tel: 061 482675-4/482336

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
Cork University Hospital, Cork. tel: 021 4922143

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
Bon Secours Hospital, Cork. tel: 021 4801738/4

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
Mercy University Hospital, Cork. tel: 021 4907524

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
Kerry General Hospital, Tralee, Co. Kerry. tel: 066 7184107

**Centre of Nurse Education,**  
Waterford Regional Hospital, Waterford. tel: 051 842726

**Centre of Nurse and Midwifery Education,**  
Sligo/ Letrim, Cregg House, Rosses Point Road, Sligo. tel: 071 9177090

**Centre for Nursing and Midwifery Education,**  
St Conal’s Hospital, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. tel: 074 9123728

**Centre for Nurse Education,**  
St Brigid’s Complex, Ardee, Co. Louth. tel: 047 77402

**Centre for Nurse Education, Satellite Centre,**  
Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, Co. Louth. tel: 041 9874771

**Centre for Nurse Education,**  
Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. tel: 0506 46289

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## Schools currently providing Return to Midwifery Practice Programmes

**College of Midwifery,**  
St Finbarrs Hospital, Cork. tel: 021 4923228/66555/3400

**School of Midwifery St Munchin’s,**  
Regional Maternity Hospital, Limerick. tel: 061 483157

**School of Midwifery,**  
National Maternity Hospital, Holles St, Dublin 2. tel: 01 6610277-6373586

**School of Midwifery,**  
Rotunda Hospital, Dublin 1. tel: 01 8171720-8171724

## School of Paediatric Nursing

**Our Lady’s Hospital, Crumlin, Dublin.** tel: 01 4096100 / 4558111

This course will be run in partnership with the Centres of Nurse Education in the Region

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## Nursing & Midwifery Planning and Development Units

### HSE Southern Area

Unit 8A South Ring Business Park, Kinsale Road, Cork. tel: 021 4927460

### HSE North Eastern Area

St Brigid’s Hospital, Ardee, Co Louth. tel: 041 6853206

### HSE North Western Area

Iona House, Main Street, Ballyshannon, Co Donegal. tel: 071 9822106

### HSE South Eastern Area

Office Complex, Kilcreene Hospital, Kilkenny, Co Kilkenny. tel: 056 7785629

### HSE Western Area

Merlin Park Regional Hospital, Galway, Co Galway. tel: 091 775841

### HSE Mid Western Area

Head Office, 31/33 Catherine Street, Limerick, Co Limerick. tel: 061 483306

### HSE Midland Area

Unit 4, Central Business Park, Clonminch, Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co Offaly. tel: 0506 57870/57866

### HSE Eastern Region

Stewarts Hospital, Palmerstown, Dublin 20. tel: 01 620 1774

## Reading list

An Bord Altranais (2000) Code of Professional Conduct for each Nurse and Midwife. Dublin: An Bord Altranais [www.nursingboard.ie](http://www.nursingboard.ie)

An Bord Altranais (2000) Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Framework. Dublin: An Bord Altranais. [www.nursingboard.ie](http://www.nursingboard.ie)

Department of Health and Children (1998). Report on the Commission on Nursing; A Blueprint for the future. Dublin: The Stationery Office. [www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)

Durand, M. A. & Randhawa, (2002) G. Nurses’ views about returning to practice after a career break. British Journal of Nursing, Vol. 11, No 7

Lavery, I., Cook, F., Laing, J., Rae, A. & Kilbride, L. (2004) Return to the future. Nursing Management. Vol 11, No 6. Oct 2004

McCarthy, G., Tyrell, M.P., Cronin, C (2002) National Study of Turnover in Nursing and Midwifery DOHC

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2004), The PREP handbook. Protecting the public professional standards. Nursing and Midwifery Council, 23 Portland Place, London W1B1PZ.

Policy and Strategic Projects Division. (2001) Nurse Recruitment and Retention Committee Victorian Government Department of Human Services, Melbourne Victoria.

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## Web Sites and Internet addresses of interest

[www.nursingboard.ie](http://www.nursingboard.ie)  
An Bord Altranais

[www.ncnm.ie](http://www.ncnm.ie)  
The National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)  
Health Service Executive

[www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)  
Department of Health and Children

[www.nire.ie](http://www.nire.ie)  
Nursing Information Research Exchange

[www.nursingcareers.ie](http://www.nursingcareers.ie)  
[www.careersinhealthcare.ie](http://www.careersinhealthcare.ie)  
[www.dohc.ie/foi/voluntary](http://www.dohc.ie/foi/voluntary)  
Employers

[www.nursingnetuk.com/enrolled\\_conversion\\_csrcu](http://www.nursingnetuk.com/enrolled_conversion_csrcu)  
[www.rdlleadning.org.uk](http://www.rdlleadning.org.uk)  
Enrolled Nurse Conversion Programme

Prepared by the Steering Committee for Return to  
Nursing and Midwifery Practice Project 2005



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