

PLACEMENT *blog*

My very first placement for my Adult Nursing degree was at Heavitree Day Case Unit. I felt a sense of relief that my first placement was at the smaller hospital rather than the main site, which to a first year student seemed a vast and daunting place. Heavitree is a small, friendly, accessible hospital and I received a warm welcome from the team. Being a mature student with very



little healthcare experience I felt vulnerable, like an impostor stepping into the shoes of a health care professional but having no idea whether this would be the career for me.

Would I like it? Would they like me?

To change from running my own catering business to becoming a student nurse was a big deal, and a risk.

This first placement felt crucial to cementing my future career plans and reassuring me that I had made the right move. I had no idea what to expect but I hoped that the people would be friendly and that my previous life experience would carry me through.

My placement exceeded all my expectations.

My mentor and co-mentor were welcoming and informative, helping to find my feet and within a couple of weeks I felt like part of the team. As I knew nothing about day surgery, I found everything interesting and the whole team spent time and energy answering my many questions. I realised how much I love working with people, talking to patients and being part of a team of professionals.

To support my learning my lovely mentor Alison encouraged me to work not only on the ward but also in theatre. To be honest I didn't feel so enthusiastic about this – I saw theatre as an inaccessible, frightening place that felt way out of my comfort zone. However we are told as students to make the most of every opportunity and I knew that I might not have this chance again so I said yes.

I was gently introduced to the world of surgery – from identifying and counting the surgical instruments to understanding the surgical policies and cleaning down.

To my great surprise I loved it in theatre! I felt completely at ease, there is a real feeling of inter-professional teamwork where every role from the theatre assistant, to the surgical nurse, surgeon and even me, the student nurse, is respected and valued.

It is an intensely focused environment but with warmth and good feeling within the team. My absolute highlight was when the Theatre Sister, Kate, taught me how to scrub up, and I assisted the surgeon with a hernia operation. I had never seen



anything like it before, it was fascinating and elating to be enabled to have such an experience. The whole team included me and encouraged me. I cannot thank them enough for giving me the confidence and experience I needed to know that I have chosen the right career path and that I will enjoy it too.

By working on the ward, in theatre and in recovery I got a unique insight into the whole picture of nursing patients who come in for day surgery. I could never have predicted how much I enjoyed my time with the theatre team and I encourage all nursing students to do it should they have the opportunity. Being a Scrub Nurse is now something I will consider doing in the future, and without this experience I

know I would have dismissed it out of hand. It just goes to show how worthwhile it is to do the things you are most scared of sometimes!



My top tip to other nursing students is to take every opportunity you are given and try everything – you never know, you could love it!

Hannah Jones