



Returning to training before and after SupportTT

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I am currently a ST5 Clinical Radiology trainee in a London teaching hospital. I have two young children aged 18 months apart, taking maternity leave 2017/18 and 2018/19, both within the final 2 years of my radiology training. The separate London School of Radiology and HEE SupportTT guidance documents were published just as I started my second maternity leave, so I experienced returning to work both with and without these.

After my first return to work I recall being apprehensive about signing off reports, particularly plain films. Having been an independent plain film reporter for a couple of years beforehand, I felt inhibited about asking for my reports to be reviewed. So during my first few days back I spent far longer on each film, double and triple checking everything until my confidence returned that I hadn't forgotten everything! However, some areas of work I found easier to return to than expected, such as diagnostic ultrasound lists. A colleague was on standby for my first list if help was required, but most queries were on use of the IT systems, rather than performing or interpreting the scans. No formal re-initiation period was organised for my return, although I was given a supernumerary rota for the first two days to allow me to get back to speed, retrieve passwords and IT access etc.

I found the prospect of returning after my second maternity leave a little harder, even though I knew what to expect. My second baby was still regularly waking during the night, and life with two under 3 years was somewhat exhausting! However, this time I had the reassurance of a prior agreed plan with my TPD on the level of support required in my first two weeks back. As a final year trainee at this stage, I felt that it was important to have formal supervision in those areas in which I was considered almost fully independent, including plain film and CT reporting and basic interventional skills, in order to return to independence as early as possible. Unlike my first return, I had a named consultant who checked my first 30 plain film reports and this gave me the confidence within my first week that I was up to speed and could continue independently. Additionally, having another trainee in the room when performing the first couple of ascetic and pleural drains, helped me re-build my skills more quickly.

In the few weeks prior to returning from my second maternity leave I successfully applied for funding from the HEE SupportTT programme towards attending an Advanced CXR course, and to access Radiopaedia online courses. Both were very helpful. The CXR course gave me a concentrated one day refresher just before I returned to work, and the advantage of the Radiopaedia course modules is that I could watch these at home without having to organise childcare, and they were tailored to the specialist areas relevant to my training. I also attended the London School of Radiology's 'Return to Training Course for Radiology Trainees', which provided a great refresher across the specialties, particularly on acute imaging.

Overall, I have found the return to work guidance valuable in allowing me to tailor what support I needed and in seeking help without question or judgment. In the midst of sleep deprivation and anxiety about leaving my children with a carer this helped with a smooth return back to full-time work!

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