



CONNECT HEALTH Bee-inspired

Rachael Marsden, Senior MSK Physiotherapist, Merton tells her inspirational story, from working in the NHS for 17 years, dealing with a prolonged illness, then joining Connect and blossoming into a brilliant physio and hugely valued and popular team member.



“After my illness, I was just overwhelmed with how accommodating Connect has been. My peers are friendly, helpful and work to such a high standard, they are great role models.”



Connect’s role has been fundamental in my recovery – a gradual return with constant support and approachability.

I joined Connect in August 2017, after 17 years in the NHS at St Helier’s Trust and Sutton and Merton PCT.

How did you get into physio?

Growing up, I was very much influenced by my parents who were both medics. I enjoyed working with people and felt physiotherapy would be a suitable career choice so in 1994 I commenced Physiotherapy at the University of Teesside.

I enjoyed working in MSK outpatients and I was employed soon after qualifying by St Helier’s Trust in 1997. I progressed from being a band 5 physiotherapist to a band 6 and before I was sick, I was acting up band 7 and held a managerial post looking after a dynamic team of physios, assistants and admin staff.

Unfortunately I became ill in September 2014 and as a result, had a total of 3 years of being unable to work. In the last year, I was diagnosed with pulmonary hypertension which was very difficult as just walking 5 steps uphill made me short of breath which would result in me having to sit down. After successful treatment, my consultant agreed I would be able to return to work on a part time basis and I joined Connect in August 2017 after they had taken over running the Merton service.

How did it feel to return to work after 3 years of illness?

I was fearful and anxious, after being off for so long and going through mental and physical challenges, I was worried I couldn’t do the job, I wouldn’t remember things and that I wouldn’t be able to cope, especially as I fatigued easily.

Right from the beginning, my correspondence with Connect was positive. Regular meetings with management were non-threatening and all concerned were friendly, supportive and very approachable.

How different was it, working for Connect?

I had been employed by the NHS for 17 years – my whole career – and when I returned to work, I would have a new employer in Connect so I was apprehensive about joining an independent provider.

Looking at the way things were run and how patients were managed, it was slightly different to what I was used to doing including appointment lengths and assessment techniques. For example, the patient subjective assessment is carried out using PhysioLine which is early telephone assessment and advice. **Eventually I've got used to it and now appreciate how well PhysioLine works with triaging patients and signposting them to the correct pathway.**

The new computer system Emis, is far superior to the one I was used to (Rio). Before I used to have to type letters, manually print and send them. All I need to do now is save and close and it will be sent for me.

At Connect, there is a great advantage of being able to refer patients directly to the correct pathway, for example to the CATs team or to women's health – **I can just refer at the click of a button and not have to refer back to the GP.**

“ I'm overwhelmed with how accommodating they have been.”

Connect

Floor 2, The Light Box,
Quorum Business Park,
Benton Lane,
Newcastle upon Tyne,
Tyne and Wear,
NE12 8EU

How have you settled in?

Prior to my illness, I was always known as the old timer, and everyone joked I was part of the furniture, so to be the newbie was quite daunting. I have found all staff positive, dynamic and approachable. With mutual agreement and support from management I was initially given longer physio appointments and extra admin slots, again demonstrating how accommodating Connect are. My progress was monitored regularly and any diary changes were mutually agreed in advance.

What kept you going?

I've always worked and require structure in my day to day living. When I was ill, it was always my goal to get back to work. I enjoy physiotherapy; it's an important part of me and who I am. Obviously my family, including my now 19 year old twins, and support of friends was invaluable to me keep going.

Any advice to others?

I'd say keep in contact with work, so you know where you are with them. If you're off ill, my advice is, if you are able to, keep up-to-date with your CPD. It's amazing after 3 years how much has changed in the physiotherapy world! Mentally and physically doing things I enjoy was vital and walking was my friend.

What about the future?

My managers have said it's up to me what I want to do which is amazing. **I'm overwhelmed with how accommodating they have been – I don't know if anywhere else would have been.** I've planned to increase my hours to 4 days and professionally I have a special interest in shoulders and chronic pain so I'd like to spend more time and energy in developing those skills.

If you'd like to find out more about working at Connect, contact hr@connecthealth.co.uk



0191 250 4580
generalenquiries@connecthealth.co.uk
connecthealth.co.uk

