Gemma's revalidation story

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Gemma is a registered children's nurse and a teacher in the West Midlands.

Gemma wrote this story when she was working in a small education team at one of the largest children's hospice trusts in the world. She also held an honorary contract with the local children's acute territory centre.

In this story Gemma reflects on what she had to consider when revalidating as a teacher and the unique challenges she faced.

Sharing knowledge

> "Sharing knowledge, excellence from learning and keeping up to date with evidence-based practice is important to ensure we all practise to high standards of care. This is why I love teaching nursing skills to both pre and post registered healthcare professionals, carers and families."

Revalidating post-Covid-19

> "The hospices remained open during the Covid-19 pandemic and my honorary contract within acute care services continued. I am so proud to be part of the children's nursing workforce. Not only does high standards of care continue within children's services, but many children's nurses also support adult patient care in different settings, working outside of their comfort zones with professionalism and a great team ethic.
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> "I have revalidated twice before, but this time I am going to be creative with the experiences I've been exposed to. I want to incorporate a circular method to the process: when does overthinking turn into reflective practice?
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> "With everything we experienced in the Covid-19 pandemic, it's valuable to know at times that we may have overthought our day. On some of these days, it was helpful to take some time to be present in the moment; to acknowledge these thoughts, jot them down and then explore them using a reflective model, such as the Gibbs Reflective Cycle, to help make sense of it.
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> "I would then think about some of my colleagues' feedback on the situation/event that I was dwelling on and highlight these too if they were related to me professionally. This would help develop content for my revalidation.
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> "One thought would equal a reflection and feedback. Or I could go one step further and think of CPD opportunities I've recently had, such as physical training that supported this knowledge or decision making, or an article I've read etc."

Carrying out CPD during Covid-19

> "We had less face-to-face learning and conferences to attend, and no staff to support protected study time. However, we all learned every day. Some of us participated in online learning, attended online conferences, read articles to support knowledge or, most importantly, learnt new skills with 'work-based learning'. This involved working in different settings, working with adults, on a specialised unit or in the community etc."

Reflecting on the highs and lows

> "It's always easier to think of the moments you're proud of; the big achievements and positive differences you've made to patients and their families or to your team members. Capture those moments and the feedback too. Be proud of these and use them to fuel your burning passion for nursing. These are moments commonly shared with peers and managers and may easily flow into a reflective model and discussion with your confirmer.

“This year I will also ensure that I reflect on some of the other thoughts we may get – the lows. These are the moments where I was out of my comfort zone: ‘how did this feel?’ and ‘how was I resilient to this?’. I will share the doubts I had and how negativity/ low morale from others affected my energy and passion.

“Also, the times I felt like an imposter. As a nurse and/or educator, everyone thinks you have all the answers, but I’d often wonder if what I was sharing and bringing to the table was ‘good enough’ during a pandemic, sticking to the basics. This is powerful and thought provoking, but don't be afraid of being transparent and honest.

“It’s okay to be human in your revalidation; we worked through the pandemic and we, as a team of nurses, will be stronger for it in time. Remember to capture the difficult moments and find your strengths that shine even when we face adversity.”

A wide range of feedback

“I think we all get feedback every day, but we need to choose to capture it as we go along and not just at the later stages of revalidation. Think of the thank you letters, cards, and the verbal feedback you’ve received during a meeting or appraisal.

“After teaching, I have provided anonymous digital surveys to participants to allow for honest feedback that we may not get to capture in person. One piece of feedback suggested that I tend to get overwhelmingly passionate on a specific element in a course that I teach. The feedback finished with advice: ‘Gemma, just pause after your passion overload, allow our minds that have been enriched with a new perspective to catch up, take it in and reflect on what's been said as it's oh so valuable!’ After reading this, I made sure to add in time for where my presence is silent for just a moment and positive feedback has continued.” This links to the code, thinking about 9.2 'gather and reflect on feedback from a variety of sources, using it to improve your practice and performance' and how I have used this feedback to make a difference to my teaching style."

Advice for others

“Be creative! This year, I am going for a digital portfolio. I have folders and folders in the loft of amazing things I feel I have learnt, achieved, and shared, but it's rare for me to sit up there and explore the past.

“With my new digital outlook, I have developed a digital folder for my revalidation, with sections for each area of evidence required. I can then share this either face-to-face around a computer or via a virtual platform with my confirmer, making revalidation even more easy for those with little time to get together in person.

“Be proud of your achievements and share them to inspire others to be motivated in their roles.

“Be passionate for high standards of nursing care and advocate for children and their families. If you think something can be done better, or if something is missing a step, research and develop your ideas for positive change. Evaluate these changes and share through publication. Then after all this, capture it for revalidation. Highlight your CPD, reflect on your process and gain feedback from others.”