

Derbyshire General Practice Champions

Dr Ruth Bentley



Salaried GP - four sessions a week

Named GP for Safeguarding Children - 3 sessions a week

Medical Advisor for Adoption and Fostering - 2 hrs a week

Career Journey:

I will try and explain how I ended up with a Portfolio Career – or as I call it: making it up as I go along. It took me a while to decide to do a medical degree in the first place. After a year in agricultural college and then a three year Neuroscience degree I applied for Medicine and worked for a year in customer service until I started (a very useful skill set with some patients!). I had always planned to be a GP and headed straight for the Chesterfield VTS. I got married before finishing my degree and had my first child before I finished the VTS so returned part time. Eventually I actually finished! I worked as a locum for a few months and saw an advert for a School Doctor at Chesterfield Royal – only 6 months paediatric training needed. I worked Locum GP alongside the School Doctor role and had another child. While I was on Mat leave someone in the children in care team left and I started working with the Children In Care Team as a Medical Advisor. I started doing the adult health reports for foster carers and adopters and still do that role for the team. I also started attending Adoption Panels as a Medical Advisor which was fascinating for someone as nosy as I am. Then the twins arrived (buy one get one free!). I was doing less locum work over time and eventually decided to stop GP work and take on a Named GP for Safeguarding Role instead to run alongside the School Doctor role. I also moved up to Lead School Doctor. I continued doing this for a couple of years but eventually realised that I really missed the variety and clinical challenge of GP work. I just scraped back into the GP workforce with some excellent help and support from a willing practice and the powers that be. Since then I have continued to work as a salaried GP alongside my other roles.

Best things about my roles:

I have a busy life with four children who are growing up fast (read more demanding, not less!). I feel I have a good balance now. Two full days of general practice – during which time the husband takes over the children – and three days to fit in my other roles which I work flexibly around work meetings, kids school things, and life in general. My safeguarding and children in care work has taught me a lot about trauma and attachment which not infrequently translate into General Practice (and not just for the kids). I get to do safeguarding teaching for other GP's which is great and I've started teaching the registrars safeguarding too so you might come across me at some point!

Best pieces of advice I received:

There are several! Work to live, not live to work is definitely one to remember. My very first appraisal included on my PDP to remember to bring cake to work to practice my baking skills – a tip I still use today! Never say Never. And I still remember my first ever consultant saying "If I ever hear you say "That's not my job" you'll be off my service" – this reminds me that we are part of a team. always work to make other team members life easier if you can and they will do the same.