

Mammography Associate Practitioner Case Study

We talk to Vicky Humphrey, Mammography Associate Practitioner and her manager, Heather Mower, Lead Mammographer/ Advanced Practitioner Radiographer from the Symptomatic Breast Unit at the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

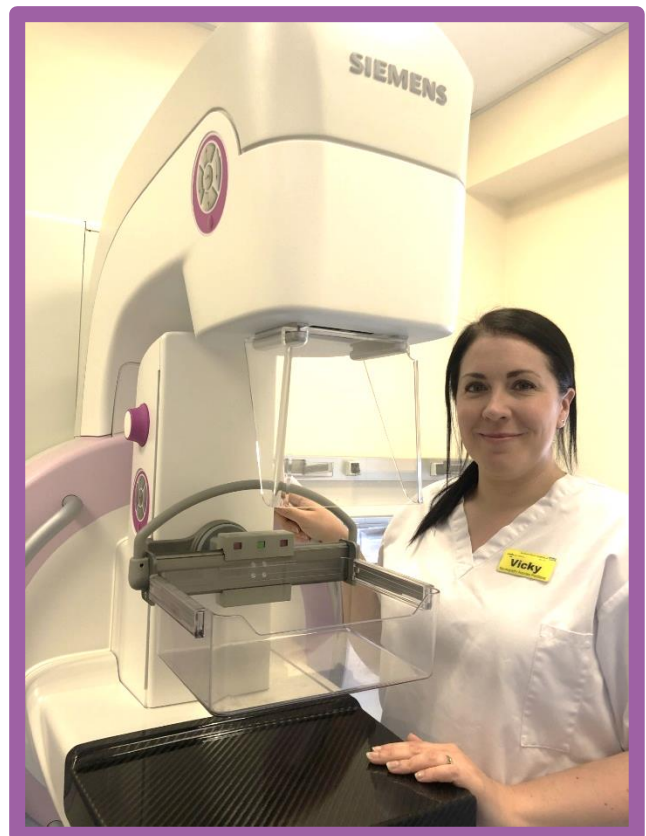
Vicky Humphrey Mammography Associate Practitioner talking about her role ...

What did you do before you became a Mammography Associate?

I was a radiology department assistant for five years before deciding to do the apprenticeship. I worked a lot within the main department but one of my primary job roles was being an assistant in the breast clinic. So, when the Associate Practitioner job became available, it seemed like a natural career progression as the breast side of things was something that I really enjoyed and was a big part of my job role.

How did you find the apprenticeship training?

My training was during the COVID pandemic so most of my course was online which was a shame as you learn different techniques from watching various other people.



With regards to The National Breast Imaging Academy training in Manchester, I feel that I was fully supported throughout and there were lots of people who were always

available if I had any queries or needed extra support. We did online tutorials which were well organised and I found the feedback from assessments both helpful and positive. I had regular meetings with my mentors in the department and my tutors from Manchester to check in and see how things were progressing which helped make it a smooth ride really despite COVID being a massive obstacle! The online resources were easy to access and very informative too.

What do you like most about the role?

I like being more involved – you're not just somebody's assistant as it were and it gives you a sense of independence. I can go into the Mammo room and be that patient's person, guiding them through their mammogram which is really lovely. The patient interaction is definitely the best part of my role. We are a symptomatic clinic so we spend a lot of our time with women who are worried about a change/lump they have found which can be very distressing for them. I have learnt how to deal with people in lots of different ways and support them through circumstances that can be quite traumatic.

What value do you think the role adds to the department?

I think the role is good as it is an extra person to help within the team that can be solely dedicated to mammograms. In our department I am the only person who works here all the time as the other mammographers work in the rest of the department too. I am able to do follow up mammograms as long as there is mammographer available to check my images or assist if required. So, I think it is a good extra role.

What would you say to someone thinking about a career as a mammography associate?

Definitely do it! It is such a wonderful job. It is definitely worth doing and a good career progression from working in the department. It is so worthwhile, I absolutely love my job.

Heather Mower, Lead Mammographer/ Advanced Practitioner Radiographer talking about the experience of taking on a mammography associate practitioner

We're quite a small unit here, just seeing symptomatic patients and we've always had radiographers doing our mammograms, who also rotate through the general department. So, we were thinking how else can we help support our team? We'd seen that at other places, assistant practitioners work well and we thought they could also chaperone in clinics and have multiple purposes. It was only just as we were looking at courses that someone highlighted that this new apprenticeship was happening. The Royal Devon is really supportive of apprenticeships as a development route for our staff, so we thought it might be a good opportunity and that's how we got onto the course.

We had lots of applicants, people were interested in the role as anything at that level gets lots of interest. We got applicants from all sorts of areas of the Trust but we employed Vicky as she was already working as a radiology department / healthcare assistant so had a good level of experience and knowledge.

The training was good but we were impacted by COVID so all Vicky's practical training was in-house. She has done very well, we are very pleased with her as a mammographer.

Before we had the role of Mammography Associate Practitioner, we were drawing on radiographers in the department but now we have someone else to do mammograms. As we have problems recruiting radiographers, it gives us some extra flexibility for staffing and it also gives people working within the department at level 3 opportunities for career progression.