

As an airline cabin crew member, Tamryn Saby spent 11 years jetting across the world but after being furloughed during the Covid pandemic, the 45-year-old found herself with plenty of time on the ground to reassess her career.

In March 2021, Tamryn began a new role working at Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust's (CCS) large-scale vaccination sites and has since embarked on a therapeutic radiography degree. Here Tamryn shares how she's been inspired to join the NHS workforce.

"When Covid hit, I was furloughed on and off and wanted to use that time effectively to explore alternative career options. I couldn't see myself flying for the next 20 years however I kept going round in circles, so I booked a couple of online sessions with a career guidance counsellor who was incredibly helpful.

"We narrowed down what I've liked about previous jobs, what I'd like to do going forward in terms of working with people, working in a team, shifts and hours, etc and I also did some psychometric testing which happened to bring up health sciences. After doing some research, I discovered I was drawn to radiotherapy specifically because it's a good combination of working with high-tech equipment and is predominantly people focussed.

"In January 2021, I simultaneously applied for a degree in therapeutic radiography and to support the Covid vaccination programme. I saw the vaccine roll-out as a unique opportunity to help the NHS and I hoped that by getting involved, it would help us all return to 'normal' sooner.

"Two months' later, I started working full-time as a front of house administrator at Chesterton Bowls Club vaccination site and since then I've also worked at CCS' other Cambridge sites in Cherry Hinton and the Grafton Centre and done some shifts on the mobile unit.

"As well as first aid training, I felt I had a lot of transferable skills that stood me in good stead. For example, I was used to meeting and greeting passengers as they boarded and disembarked from the aircraft, as well as working under pressure and dealing with a lot of people in a short space of time.

"As cabin crew, we worked with a different team every day and had a plane load full of new passengers and that experience definitely helped me adjust to working at the vaccination sites where we work with different colleagues every shift.

"Some people arrive quite nervous and that's not too dissimilar to those on board an aircraft so having the ability to just be able to chat and provide reassurance is vital.

"One of my highlights has been the gratitude of the public. In addition, working with such a diverse team has been fantastic. Originally colleagues were pulled from all over CCS and later we had people join us from all walks of life, so it's been interesting to meet, learn from and seek advice from such a variety of people.

"Each shift is busy and can be hard because we're used to seeing a high volume of people. As we're going through the same process with every single person, it can also be quite monotonous, but the team are so supportive and entertaining, and that's the reason I've stuck with it.

"Everyone I've worked with has been inspirational or motivational in some way and I've found them really encouraging too. Being part of the vaccine roll-out has certainly built my confidence and enabled me to feel better prepared for my university interview.

“In terms of challenges, I’d say the main ones have been dealing with the sheer volume of people, which is really a positive as it’s meant vaccine uptake has been high, and having to keep up with constant changes to national guidance.

“Now I’ve started my degree, I still work at the vaccination sites one day a week to fit around my studies. I thoroughly enjoy it so I’m reluctant to give it up and as a student I’m dependent on the income too!

“I’d encourage anyone looking for a career switch to consider the NHS as there are so many different roles. In fact, I’m pretty sure there’s a role for everyone, whatever your area of interest or strengths might be.

“I loved my time working for an airline and have some great memories but I’m equally excited about the future and embracing the opportunity to make a real difference to people’s lives every day!”