Experiences of an NHS returner
Dr Ian Jutting

Ian retired from general practice in September 2015 in Kent. He continued health screening sessions for a further year.

Ian was in the second cohort of ‘3-6 years from retirement’ to have his GMC licence restored by email, which included a link to the ‘NHS returner’ questionnaire. An automated reply advised that he would be called within five days to discuss the associated pathways. No-one has ever called! A colleague suggested applying directly to the NHS Performers List for restoration to the list, which was completed within a few days. The application advised that names would be passed to the COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Service (CCAS) as part of the NHS 111 service. Again, he didn’t hear anything. Meanwhile he found the relevant training materials on HEE’s eLearning for Health (e-LfH) portal, completing most of the modules. While applying for access to the final module late one evening, his request was answered by the Incident Director for the CCAS Response Team! Very quickly all the missing links to CCAS were provided allowing the formal application to be submitted. It took a further 3.5 weeks to complete the ‘onboarding’ process as necessary employment checks had to be completed behind the scenes.

The work is interesting, varied and has some challenges. There is good support, as required, during each session. Support is also available via the COVID-19 forum, together with specific webinars and post-shift debrief meetings. Loan IT equipment is provided by the NHS. Calls arising from all over England are dealt with. Shifts of a 4-hour duration are booked in advance around other commitments and this works well. Around 80% of the calls can be managed by discussion and advice without onward referral. It does seem that we are making a difference, so it is worthwhile.