# Michelle Interview 2 - 2018

01:01

## C

Are you still at the same place?

## Michelle

I haven't moved house and I haven't changed jobs all that is still the same at the moment.

## C

I presume that means that you are fairly content.

## Michelle

I am settled at the minute, content … I think the job the job is still quite busy but where I am living, because I was only coming back here at weekends prior to actually leaving the service it quite quiet so I am still trying to meet people and fit into the community.  Which I am starting to do.  I have certainly made a few more friends locally both through work and other stuff.

## C

What is your out of service date?

## Michelle

My out of service date was 6 August 17.

## C

So, you are still finding your feet there then really?

## Micelle

yeh it is just that a lot of my service friends and even my civilian friends are at least an hour plus drive away.  So, and when I first bought my house here it was because of its location to service contacts.  So, it was an hour and 10minutes to get to High Wycombe it was an hour to get to Birmingham, 35 minutes to Brize.  I t was a logistics hub the plus side to me was the fact that family were again only an hour away. So, it’s not completely isolated.

## C

No but it’s just that ability to pop round for a cuppa that's what you miss when you are .. you can't do the impromptu things.  I know what you mean.  Shall I just crack straight into it, we won’t be more than an hour do you have a back-stop time we need to finish by?

## Michelle

No, it’s just I have got things to get down so if it goes over a little bit that is fine.  Once again plans have shifted yet again its other people changing things.

## C

On reflection then how do you feel about leaving the RAF now, are you still content?

## Michelle

I still think it was a good move I still think it was the right time funny enough I was at an RAF nurse’s centenary celebration in London last week.  So, I met up with quite a few colleagues who are still serving and at least 3 of them came up and said do you know what you have done really well and you certainly left the right time so that is really reassuring all of then independently.  I mean 3 of them have been promoted in the last 2 years and they said do you know what there are no jobs for me to go to I don't know what else I want to do I am probably going to leave.  And I could almost see the writing on the wall from where I was and I thought I'd rather go while I am still enjoying it rather than resenting it cause I was offered an extension and I thought do you know what there is no point.04:44 So overall yes.

## C

So if there was anything you could change about your leaving experience about how you approached it or how it was manged by the service is there anything you would change?

## Michelle

I think the one thing is I don't think the 2-year resettlement time it’s not enough.  I think you almost need 3 another year to do these are the things you need to do for your resettlement time.  So certainly, things because what happened with me my dad was unwell so I had registered early and I had booked everything and then that all slipped so I lost about 10 months of my resettlement period whereas I could have been going on courses and doing a few more workshops and I didn't ever get that time back.  So I said to my colleagues who are looking at leaving is join the pension society earlier because there are certain things they can do regarding your pension whether its whether you should basically do you know what don't stay for the last 12 months ?@?@? you know we advise you to stay in that 2 years because financially it would be better for you and that has what I have told people because on the old pension scheme you have to give your commute you have to let them know you want to commute 9 months before you leave but that is not advertised anywhere until you go for your pension brief and sometimes if you have missed that window you have missed the window.

## C

Oh, I didn't know that.

## Michelle

You see nobody does.

## C

I must have done it then by accident.

## Michelle

But yeh that is on the old system and I don't people have forgotten whether this is combined and those of us who were on the old system are getting fewer and fewer they are not advertising as much.  But then because with nursing we are not on a station you don't have that ?@?@? element on site. And you we know we have to travel for stuff so you also again the other thing I was discouraged by and that is even with the CTP is geographically where I am located I don't actually fit into a region there is no central region.  I am not London I am not West Midlands I am not East Midlands I am not North there is no central area so when I registered for some of the workshops and jobs I had to register for all to capture the ones that could have fitted for where I was.

## C

So, there are so flaws in the system.  I do believe that you can access your resettlement once you have left for a certain period.

## Michelle

You can still access CTP career advisor.

## C

No, I mean doing resettlement courses and things like that.

## Michelle

Oh OK, I think there are some ones you don't have access to the funding.

## C

I don't know.  I just know it is different to what happened to me.  So, I haven't looked it up properly.

## Michelle

I know I can still do some of the courses, you know you get that £750 when you exit service no matter how much of that you have or haven't used ?@?@? you can get access to some of the other course.

## C

So how would you describe that leaving process then, looking back at it?

## Michelle

I suppose I thought I had it well planned but at the end it felt quite rushed.  Also, as well I knew that my job that I was handing over was going to be gapped so I had to do a lot of practices to sort that out to make sure the people I was managing all their MPARs and things were done and everything was up to date before I left.  Knowing they wouldn't have anybody in that post for at least 4 weeks.  Which doesn't sound a lot but it is for certain individuals and to manage it but yeh it felt a bit rushed towards the end.

## C

So, if you could give yourself some advice then what would it be?

## Michelle

That advice potentially yes as well but also for me when I did think long and hard about what I wanted to do I knew what I didn't want to do but I didn't know exactly what I did want to do and CTP said that was fine looking at careers and stuff but I think possibly I think I would have looked at I think the other thing that didn't help for me was when I went to do my career transition workshop they were in the middle of changing over the data base so a lot of the courses I looked at on day 1 by the third day the whole data base had changed and all the courses I had been looking at had all disappeared.  SO, I think I probably would have made use of CTP a bit more.

## C

And you didn't give yourself much time did you between leaving and starting this new job.

## Michelle

Em I had 6 months off.

## C

Did you I thought you went pretty much straight into it.

## Michelle

No, I actually physically left work in May because I had got my accrued leave and resettlement so I left work on the 1 May and I didn't start my job until 31 Oct.

## C

Oh, ok my mistake sorry.

## Michelle

My exit service date was 6Aug.

## C

That is probably what I am thinking yeh.

## Michelle

So, no I did have the whole of the summer off and I needed that time.  To kind of switch off and I have to say by the the beginning of October I was saying you know I am quite glad I have got a job to go to I need to do something, I was getting a bit board towards the end.

## C

What would you say then was it just boredom or was it just time that you were missing about work?

## Michelle

It’s difficult to say really, I think the other thing to say as well I was paid up until the end of August or beginning of August so there was no real incentive but then because of the drop you kind of go ok.  so, to maintain a degree of lifestyle and to have that kind of buffer and security I thought do you know what I probably do think I need to look for a job.  It wasn't  I was not going to have a job it wasn't my intention not to get one and I didn't want to get a full-time job it was more the case of I do need to get a job I just happen to look locally and it was the first job I applied for, the first job I got so it was a very straight forward I didn't have to look particularly hard.  I did look at a couple of other jobs some further afield some more high powered and I thought why put myself back into a stressful situation where the job I have got it is busy.  I don't take work home I literally work my 30 hours.  I came home from work late today but then I won’t feel guilty about leaving work early another time where possible.  Pretty much what I used to do in my other job but I know I am using the skills in the military to actually benefit a local charity and get help them develop their policies and procedures and that is what I wanted to do.

## C

Ok we will come back to that in a minute but would you say there is anything that you miss about the military at this point?

## Michelle

I miss the people.  And I said that all along but I am still in touch with a lot of them and obviously as I said I went to the celebration last week I am going to the cocktail party they have organised in September and I am still in touch with friends on Facebook and stuff. So, I don't there are lots of ex-PM websites Facebook things that are around so you can keep as much or as little contact as you want.  I think potentially the fact that it is the 100 year celebration this year and you are not actually in service is a bit of a double edged sword but I think having seen what happened last week at the centenary celebrations the stress that the project officer and her team went through I thought you know what I am really glad I just had to rock up in civvies be entertained and somebody else can sort the problems out for a change.

## C

To go back to what you said before that question you said you are using your skills and knowledge to help the organisation you are working for now.

## Michelle

yep

## C

Can you describe to me what those skills and things are that you are able to use?

## Michelle

So basically it is still a nurse related job so I am still a qualified nurse but in out of the last 3 jobs that I did even when I was deployed involved a lot of health care governance work so its preparing the organisation for inspections and stuff like that so we would call it a HGAV from that point of view so you would go and do a governance visit to ensure all their standards are correct that they are complying with national guidelines they are doing best practice that they are training people that they are well staffed.  In essence it is having the right person in the right job who has got the right training to do everything they are supposed to do.  I am looking at their policies and processes and I haven't been I have been quite honest about the fact that I have basterdised things and I have e-mailed my old work saying can you send me this policy can you send me this?  And I have civilianised it but it is also using the flip side is I suppose I did the governance job at Headley Court for 2 years and we had a CQC inspection there so I am used to the process.  The organisation I am currently working for is a much smaller charity but it has a lot of similar issues so they have got a building and maintenance issue so Headley Court was an old building that expanded you have got a lot of civilian and part time staff, part time working staff.  So, we encouraged to set up a command board type structure so you have got the strategic and operational leads.  So, it is using all of that knowledge.

15:41

## C

So that is the kind of skills and knowledge that you previously had.  Do you find yourself behaving in the same way as you did when you were in the Air Force, your situation is slightly different to a lot of people because you were working in a civilian environment anyway?

## Michelle

yes

## C

But have you found you have had to change your approach to how you deal with people?

## Michelle

On the whole no.  I am always the first one there at meetings.  I am always the one that has read all of the material for the meetings.  If I get something to review or feedback on I am usually the one that has done it.  My behaviour hasn't changed in how I approach my work and my job and sometimes it is a bit annoying that people don't seem to have the same kind of urgency about it.  I wouldn't say they don’t have professional standards because they certainly do but it doesn't always translate to physically being in a place.  There is a lot of acceptance of being a little bit late or they haven't done something and there is, it is difficult to articulate but the flip side of it is I was a bit like that before but I think the military just reinforces that.  But it also trying to explain to people where they have got single points of failure and why so they had a bit of a reorganisation as I joined the organisation and I was trying to encourage them to have desk top instructions so that if somebody is off sick for some length of time somebody else could be parachuted into that post and know what the everyday churn of jobs ?@?@ is of that job.  And cause quite a few people had changed in the organisation they were saying oh we don't need to do that I said right how does that happen?  they'd go from point one to five without knowing what that bit in the middle is.  So that is kind of annoying and also the kind of urgency to get things done is not there.  But I just walk outside we have a lovely garden to go into and have a little chat for 5 minutes then come back in, cause you can't do what you would normally do and scream at people at work (laughter) also I don't have a 2ic or a sergeant I can stroke it down to to manage it, it is either down to me or I may have some admin support to get that done.

## C

What do you think has been the most striking thing about civilian life that you perhaps weren't expecting?

## Michelle

You see for me it doesn't quite sit with me. There was only 2 times in my career I was ever actually living on an active station.  One of those was Cyprus and then Wittering which was literally for 9 months so I think the transition from not living on camp having everything paid for all of that stuff I never really had.  I have either and again I didn't live in a mess for most of my career in Birmingham I was in rented properties so the whole mess life, accessibility having paid heating all that kind of stuff was more the norm for me and always has been.  Whereas for a lot of people who have only ever had to pay rent for a quarter or a mess bill the transition to civilian life and practice and not having that back up and security blanket would be massive.  I think for me it is more about the people and the contacts that daily different routine of working but I'm establishing new relationships ultimately at the end of the day it is down to me.  No one is going to knock on my door and say will you be my friend?  You know you have to go out there and meet people.  And I think we are encouraged to do it because we move around so often we are quite used to talking to people.

## C

you talked about a lot of the different things you were doing last time to try and get to meet people in the local are, are you still doing that?  Are there things you have stuck with?

## Michelle

Oh, so I still do rock choir and I joined the WI so yeh still doing both of those at the moment and then I have been to see other friends I still keep my contacts together.  Probably the only thing I haven't done yet is have a proper holiday but other than that family aren't that far away so those things I have done.  And then obviously since I started work my ability to do other things is quite restricted with those two things I am already doing?

## C

So, what do you think has been your biggest professional challenge then as you have transferred?

## Michelle

I think for me professionally I have come from an acute service as in not in the military I think that takes a back seat because I have come from a hospital background doing very acute dynamic care as in intensive care burns and plastics and then having a managerial role, the staff I managed the number of people I managed in remote locations is the total number of staff in this organisation it is trying to do that  comparator for some people but it is also telling people I have done this job before in a different iteration when I tell you things I am not telling you because I think they are a good idea they are actually based in fact.  And I think they are now starting to trust what I say because everything is coming to fruition and coming to results and things and some of the policies I am adapting from my military experience are actually workable.  I didn't know a lot about hospice care and I am learning but I think I have a separate different eye to look at it with and I think that is quite good because I am not blinkered by previous experience elsewhere in a similar setting I am bringing fresh eyes on to it.  So, it is a double-edged sword really.

## C

But you are finding that you are being listened to and they are taking note.

## Michelle

yes, as they have got used to me.22:31 I have to say I don't think it’s the most conscious thing but I have tried not to be too kind of I have tried to avoid the military abbreviations and the banter and all that goes with it.  A couple of things that go with it I have introduced which has made people chuckle so being voluntold to do something always makes them laugh. Yeh have you never been voluntold to be something?

C

No. I've never heard the expression but I have know what you mean.

## Michelle

so yeh things like that.

## C

So, you have in a way adapted your professional style a little bit then in terms of how you are dealing with people and approaching people.

## Michelle

I suppose a little bit but if I am pressed I do go back to and say look this is how it has to be and I've certainly done that a couple of times and I think one thing that did surprise my chief exec when she said oh can I talk to you about this at this particular time and I said no I've got no capacity I will have to speak to you about it next week and I don't think she was used to someone turning around to her and saying no.  And I think she was quite surprised.  I did it in a very nice way but at that point my head was spinning with loads of other things and it just fitted in with her agenda rather and I went actually no it’s not going to be the right time to do it.

## C

One of the other ladies I interviewed she has realised that she was quite brusque in her manner within the military and that she has had to change that and it wasn't until she was in the military spoke to her in the way that she used to speak to everyone else in a civilian environment she was on an aeroplane and she was like oh my goodness I have spent 22 years speaking to people like that.  How rude.  She had that moment when she thought oh my goodness and she adapted without even realising it.

## Michelle

yeh I think that comes from my profession though there is a professional way of speaking as a nurse to patients and colleagues and it doesn't matter which uniform you wear the only caveat being is normally in the military normally you put 'Sir' or 'Ma'am' at the end of it that is the only difference.

## C

we all have that idea of what that matronly the ward matron is and she is quite a scary figure really making sure everything is getting done.

## Michelle

I suppose to a certain degree yes so but in a more modern way and that is what I try to base myself on you also have to be approachable because you have to manage those individuals as well and if they can't approach you with a problem even if it is the seniors you are not doing your job well.

## C

What skill has been the most helpful in this civilian role that you got form the military?

## Michelle

What that I brought across?

## C

yeh is it your knowledge, is it your management skill is it your organisational skills

## Michelle

I think it is a combination of the knowledge that I have gained in the military and then applying that in this environment.  I have to say that because I have worked in both currently that has not been too difficult to transfer across so it has been able to read I am just trying to think of an example of how that would work.  Its speaking with a degree of authority to get them to do so managing training for example is something that I have revamped because we didn't have an assessment process an assessment of learning in the mandatory training they were doing previously.  So, in the military we used a web-based e-learning programme to do our safeguarding training through went back to the same company they provide the same training free at source to hospices but then it is reinforcing why we needed it how it should be implemented what particular modules should we do and then looking at where we could avoid duplication for people who have contracts with other trusts elsewhere and that was very specific really.  So, its project management I think the military teaches anyone to do really well.  Even though I haven't got a formal qualification or anything like that but you do get for example writing policy or briefs you do quite well because you have got the structure there and you are taught how to do it from day one and even if you don't write them you read them anyway.  You know what the terminology and the phrase of language should be.

## C

So, you talked about keeping in touch with people and going to the RAF 100 celebrations and the cocktail party so do you still consider yourself part of the wider military family even though you have left?

## Michelle

It is always part of my identity it is something that I did and I think most people once you have been in you are always it doesn't matter whether you are serving or you are a veteran you are always part of that.  there is a commonality there is a language you share there is a community you share it is not something I'd say on a day to day basis but if you know the advert for coffee where you know have you been a friend or have you spoken to me, if somebody said to me were you part of the military ?@?@?@ I am proud that I served I would never deny it and I still feel a part of that wider community but not on a day to day basis.

## C

But it is there and you know it is there.

## Michelle

Yes, but I also think that also because I am part of a service family, my father was in the Air Force, my uncle was in the Air Force so it is not an alien concept either.

## C

What would you say motivates you now?

## Michelle

At the end of the day it is to still do a good job.  There is patients and my fellow staff members who are directly affected whether I do a good or bad job myself.  I take personal pride in doing a good job at the end of the day.

## C

As you look to the future then where do you see yourself in 5 years’ time?

## Michelle

Funnily enough I had this chat when I had my 6-month probation interview and I kind of let slip.  Ultimately, if I could I would want to be fully retired and do a bit of travelling and enjoy life.   Whether that is going to be achievable I don't know but that is when my increments kick in my pension and then I have my NHS pension arrives and various other things happening.  Whether I will be at the same job, I don't know, whether I will still be in the same house I don't know but my initial first gold standard will not be working.30:50

And able to enjoy life and do stuff.  Now whether that will be also taking on some form of extra education or whatever or travel I don't know.

## C

But that is the goal.

## Michelle

That is the goal but It all depends on whether it is financially viable.

## C

Crucially, because there is no pleasure in having all the time but no money to enjoy it.

## Michelle

Exactly. The other thing is I may decide to have a job where I only work 2 days a week.  I enjoy the fact that I only work a 4-day week.  I enjoy having my 3-day weekend. And I wouldn't be prepared to give that up unless a sizeable amount of money for a very fixed length of time.

## C

That is interesting it is all about work life balance.  Which is something you can lose quite easily in the military and many other jobs.

## Michelle

yeh, I think the expectation is different because of the X factor you are expected, you are always on call, you always go to turn up they can call you at any time and you don't have the ability to say I can't you know I can't do that.  whereas here now I do have that flexibility the flip side of that is I am responsible of managing my own career rather than somebody else managing it for me and asking me about what jobs I am going to do.  Some people like being told what to do other people like making choices for themselves.

## C

Would you say you have more freedom now?

## Michelle

yes I would say I have more freedom when it comes to things like that but again it is balancing that because if you enjoy the whole structured thing and being in the military that is part of the acceptance that you have that they will tell you what jobs you have got but I think in the whole of my career I only said no once to a job and that was when they were going to send me off to Cyprus for 6 weeks as a part of Saif Sareea and I said well if you do that I have to defer my burns course for a whole year plus the  fact that Cyprus for 6 weeks, I said if you are going to send me off to the desert or something fine but not to Cyprus to stop an educational thing happening it’s not just and it’s a good job I ended up doing the course because I ended up being the defence nurse advisor for burns and plastics for the Air Force.  And literally on day 2 of my course was when 9/11 happened.

## C

yes, that changed everything didn't it.

## Michelle

yes.

## C

Actually, here is a question for you thinking back to some of the other interviews I have done.  Not only did you wear uniform obviously when you were in the military but prior to that when you were a nurse you wear a uniform anyway.  So how do you find having to find having to wear your own clothes to work?

## Michelle

I have a work wardrobe then I have a home going out wardrobe.  And I did that from day one.

## C

Did you?  You had given it some thought before you started?

## Michelle

yes so part of the process for that 6 months once I knew I got the job which was the middle of September I deliberately went through my wardrobe to get rid of stuff that I hadn't worn and there are certain bits that you buy specifically when you are in the military so you can do that smart casual and all that kind of stuff and it was a bit dowdy a bit worn so I got rid of some of those.  I got rid of a couple of ball dresses that I will never war again and then I set up a work wardrobe.  And I have stuck to that work wardrobe.

## C

And how did you find that was it quite fun or was it a bit of a chore?

## Michelle

Oh no it was fun because I did buy new things.  Basically, I went to H&M and got a whole selection of tops that were relatively smart and I don't have to iron literally stick them on the line stick them on a hanger and back in the wardrobe but it also meant that my nicest civilian clothes that if I worn them out I wouldn't be worried have I worn this to work or not?  And it also means when I do go and but clothes I go is this for work or is this for me? But I am a little bit OCD when it comes to things like that anyway.

## C

*chat about friends who have left and how they organise their wardrobes.*

## Michelle

I literally just have and it’s the way my wardrobe is constructed, so I have got this side is my work wardrobe and this side.  It’s actually 2 different wardrobes built and pushed together and the other one is my home.  So, when I am not at work there might be different tops I wear but the majority of the time my home stuff is my home stuff and work is work.

## C

*Go on to discuss the idea of using photographs of before and after photographs*.37:12

## Michelle

The whole of my working life I have worn a uniform, even in the NHS I have worn a uniform so from the age of 19 until the end of last year I was always in some form of uniform which had a dress code that with it.  I am no longer in any form of uniform I choose what I wear but I have a sort of self-imposed uniform so kind of smart casual or you know whatever it was shoes that made me think of that because my working foot ware was always doctor martins, with my clinical ward dress.  They were issue shoes at that point when I left yes issued doctor martins for our trousers but no I wouldn’t go back to when I first joined with the white tippet and the white dress and white shoes which were just hideous but it was the uniform it was what you were given.  It was hideous and the ?@?@ gave you the worst headache and neck ache in the world. So now it is the first time it is almost like how I have my identity without a uniform.  How do I identify my job?  And I think because I have transitioned from the military where you have that demob where you hand everything back that kind of eases you through that process.

## C

continues to chat about handing things in.

## Michelle

I couldn't wait to get rid of mine all it reminds me is of being gassed I couldn't wait to get rid of that and my body armour.

41:08