

# 2023 NURSE OF THE YEAR

## AWARDS PROGRAMME

15 JUNE 2023  
CULLODEN HOTEL  
HOLYWOOD

# A CELEBRATION OF NURSING



On behalf of the Royal College of Nursing in Northern Ireland, it is my great pleasure to welcome our finalists, their guests, our sponsors, RCN members and distinguished guests to the 2023 Nurse of the Year Awards ceremony. It is good to be back here at The Culloden once again for what, I am sure, will be another memorable and inspirational occasion.

These awards provide the opportunity to highlight excellence within nursing in Northern Ireland and the contribution that nursing staff make to the health and well-being of the people of Northern Ireland. Despite the ever-challenging environment, this year's finalists demonstrate how nurses in Northern Ireland continue to lead the way in delivering high quality, innovative and person-centred care, contributing to and leading the strategic objectives of service transformation and co-production. I am delighted to see that our finalists continue to be drawn from a broad diversity of settings right across Northern Ireland, reflecting the many different fields of practice in which nursing staff serve.

Once again, we are celebrating the achievements of our wonderful finalists and their contribution to nursing excellence against a background of political deadlock and financial crisis here in Northern Ireland. The RCN has made its views on this very clear over the last year. We need strong and accountable political leadership to address the unprecedented crisis affecting health and social care. Above all, this requires the formation of an Executive and a functioning Assembly, with a Minister for Health empowered to make the key strategic decisions that need to be taken. It is now time for all of our elected politicians to step up and show genuine commitment to the health and well-being of the people of Northern Ireland.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of our sponsors. You are most welcome here this evening and I hope that you will find the occasion to be rewarding. I would encourage all our guests to discover more about our sponsors through reading the information in this programme and by talking to the representatives who are here with us tonight. I am most grateful, as ever, to the judges of the various award categories, who have contributed their time and expertise in order to ensure that we appropriately reflect the excellence, innovation and diversity that exist within nursing in Northern Ireland.

I convey my admiration, gratitude and very best wishes to all our finalists and their nominators. I wish you all a most enjoyable evening.

Brige Quinn  
RCN Northern Ireland Board Chair

# OUR SPONSORS



## The Open University

The Open University is proud to sponsor the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Learning in Practice Award again this year. This award recognises the excellent teaching and learning that takes place in a range of acute and community settings in Northern Ireland. Student nurses gain invaluable learning experience whilst in clinical practice, supported by mentors, practice supervisors, managers and practice education teams. Working in partnership with the Department of Health, the health and social care trusts and the independent sector, The Open University offers an alternative route into nursing, enabling health care assistants and other support workers to study part-time, while also continuing to work in their substantive roles.



## Public Health Agency

The Public Health Agency drives the public health and social well-being agenda in Northern Ireland. It provides a sustained focus to achieving key public health goals and reducing health inequalities. The broad functions of the Public Health Agency are health improvement, health protection, reducing inequalities, improving quality, safety and experience of services, and supporting personal and public involvement.

## General Practice Federations, Northern Ireland

GP Federations in Northern Ireland are delighted to sponsor the Primary Care Nursing Award for 2023. There are 17 GP Federations across Northern Ireland. Each Federation is owned by GP practices in its geographical area, and have been established to support General Practice, aiming to facilitate the transformation agenda in health and social care in primary care settings. Within practice teams, General Practice Nurses provide an exceptional contribution in supporting people to stay well for as long as possible, deliver care close to home and aim where possible to avoid unnecessary hospital attendances and admissions. Practice Nursing teams are essential to the delivery of good patient outcomes and this award recognises and celebrates excellence and innovative practice in Primary Care Nursing.



## Department of Health

The Department's mission is to work with colleagues across the HSC to improve the health and social well-being of the people of Northern Ireland. It has a statutory responsibility to promote an integrated system of health and social care designed to secure improvement in the physical and mental health of people in Northern Ireland, the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness, and the social well-being of the people in Northern Ireland. A key aspect of that work is the promotion and support of Nurses and Midwives who form the backbone of the health and social care system in Northern Ireland. The Department's Chief Nursing Officer Group, under the leadership of the Chief Nursing Officer Maria McIlgorm, provides professional advice and direction on all issues relating to Nursing, and is leading on the implementation of the Nursing & Midwifery Task Group recommendations as well as specific nurse education (pre- and post-registration), retention, career pathways, service models and quality and safety.



## Roberta Brownlee and Silverdale Care Home

Roberta Brownlee is the owner of Silverdale Care Home in Castlederg, County Tyrone. Her innovative and strategic leadership enabled her to progress through a distinguished career to become the chief executive of the largest privately-owned health care group in the UK. Roberta has held a firm belief in the importance of strong nurse leadership from early in her career and in 2015 was awarded the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Outstanding Achievement Award for her outstanding leadership ability spanning some 47 years. In 2019, Roberta was awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours list for her outstanding charity work, which spans 40 years, alongside her significant contribution to health and social care, particularly in her role as Chair of the Southern HSC Trust. Silverdale Care Home provides extensive care for patients with complex nursing needs and is renowned for the quality of care delivered within innovative, evidence-based models. Silverdale has won many quality awards and, in 2013, home manager Geraldine Browne won the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Award for working alongside local general practitioners in Castlederg to develop a model of care that reduced the number of patients experiencing unnecessary transfers to hospital. The management team at Silverdale is committed to continued innovation with a strong emphasis on quality, safety and person-centred care.



## Balmoral Healthcare

Balmoral Healthcare is delighted to sponsor the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Independent Sector Award for 2023, a newly introduced category that we are again proud to be supporting. Balmoral Healthcare is one of Northern Ireland's leading health care agencies. Founded by Amanda McCullly and acquired by Kieran McCormick in 2021, both registered nurses, Kieran continues to run the company with the same dedication and passion for nursing which first inspired the establishment of the business in 2000. For the past 23 years, we have been building on our excellent reputation for recruiting only the highest calibre of registered nurses, paramedics, senior care assistants and health care assistants. High nursing standards and values along with a committed focus to patient safety and person-centred care is at the heart of Balmoral Healthcare, filling thousands of vacancies each year and striving to ensure safe staffing levels are continued, we take great pride in the excellent service and support we provide to our public and private sector clients.



## Defence Relationship Management, Ministry of Defence

The uniformed and civilian medical and dental personnel from the Armed Forces are known collectively as the Defence Medical Services [DMS]. The primary role of the DMS is to promote, protect and restore the health of service personnel to ensure that they are ready and medically fit to deploy where they are required in the UK and throughout the world. The DMS encompasses the entire spectrum of medical, nursing, dental, allied health professional, paramedic and support personnel to provide services including primary care, pre-hospital care, deployed hospital care, dental care, rehabilitation and specialist medical care. Nurses make up the largest cadre of personnel within the DMS. In addition to the generalist nurse, the DMS recruits nurses from specialities including (but not limited to) emergency nursing, critical care, primary care, burns and plastics, perioperative practice, paediatrics and mental health. These nurses are trained to the highest level and are prepared to deploy anywhere in the world and in any environment as part of military exercises or humanitarian missions. In Northern Ireland, the four Reserve units that employ nurses are the Royal Navy Reserve: HMS Hibernia, the Army Reserve: 204 (North Irish) Field Hospital and 253 (North Irish) Medical Regiment, and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force: 502 (Ulster) Squadron. September 2023 will see 204 (NI) Field Hospital and 253 (NI) Medical Regiment amalgamate to form 210 (North Irish) Multirole Medical Regiment which will deliver an improved medical capability streamlined from point of injury right through to damage control surgery and stabilisation prior to medical evacuation.

# OUR SPONSORS



## Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery

The Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery [NIPEC] is delighted to sponsor once again the prestigious Kathleen Robb Award for Outstanding Contribution to Nursing. NIPEC aims to improve standards of practice, education and professional development for nurses and midwives in order to facilitate their delivery of safe, effective and person-centred care. NIPEC also provides advice and information on matters relating to nursing and midwifery. NIPEC is committed to effective positive partnership working and establishing, forming and maintaining collaboration and strategic alliances with a wide range of stakeholders, partners, agencies and sectors in order to meet its aims.



## Ulster University

Ulster University's School of Nursing and Paramedic Science has been leading graduate nurse education for over 45 years and has a strong culture of research, scholarship and high-quality education. It continues to be ranked in the top ten Schools of Nursing in the UK, according to the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide. It is widely recognised for its pioneering nursing research, which improves the care of people, their families and communities, as well as producing inspirational nursing graduates who become major leaders in their profession. The Institute of Nursing and Health Research at Ulster University, which forms a key component of the School of Nursing and Paramedic Science, is involved in world-leading research and development that enhances the knowledge, expertise and engaged scholarship of nursing, midwifery, public health and the allied health professions. The RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Nursing Research Award, which is proudly sponsored by the School of Nursing and Paramedic Science at Ulster University, celebrates the achievements of nurses who have undertaken high quality research that has a positive impact on the nursing care provided.



## Patient and Client Council

The Patient and Client Council [PCC] is an independent, influential voice that connects people to Health and Social Care [HSC] services, so that they can effectively influence these services. The PCC supports patients, clients, carers and communities to bring their experience, knowledge and skills, to influence policy and practice in health and social care.



## The Queen's University of Belfast

The School of Nursing and Midwifery at the Queen's University of Belfast offers an award-winning educational experience that seeks to innovate delivery models and meet the needs of modern healthcare. It provides full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in all the disciplines of nursing and midwifery. In 2021 the School launched an exciting two-year graduate entry masters pathway inclusive of NMC registration, for applicants with an existing degree. Working in close collaboration with practice partners in state of the art facilities, students are prepared to lead and deliver high quality health care, both locally and internationally. The school is honoured to celebrate the achievements of exceptional students once again, through sponsorship of the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Student Award.



## Liverpool Victoria

RCN members are able to benefit from exclusive discounts and savings on a range of LV= insurance products through their RCN membership. Members can get discounts on both LV= Car, Multi Car and Home insurance and can also receive 10% online discount on Pet insurance (for the first year only) and 15% online discount on Travel insurance. For a quote or for more information visit [LV.com/RCN](http://LV.com/RCN).



## HSC Clinical Education Centre and Business Services Organisation

The HSC Clinical Education Centre [CEC] is a regional service of the Business Services Organisation [BSO] which delivers high quality in-service education to support the learning and development needs of nurses, midwives and allied health professionals employed by HSC Trusts. It also provides consultancy services to a variety of other organisations from the statutory, voluntary, community and independent sectors. The key aim of the CEC is to work collaboratively and be responsive to the needs of its customers to support the provision of safe and effective care. The CEC team of highly skilled professionally registered teaching staff design, deliver and evaluate a wide range of evidence-based programmes, maximising the use of modern educational approaches to enhance the learning experience. The CEC is immensely proud to sponsor the RCN Northern Ireland Team Manager of the Year Award.



## Macmillan Cancer Support

Macmillan Cancer Support is here to do whatever it takes to support people living with cancer. Our ambition is to be there for everyone, from the moment someone is told that they have cancer, for as long as we're needed to help them live life as fully as they can. Supporting people through services including the Macmillan website, our Information and Support Centres and the Macmillan Support Line, Macmillan professionals help us work with heart, strength and ambition. Macmillan nurses are at the heart of our charity's work. Right from the moment an individual is diagnosed and throughout their cancer journey, they should have access to the highest quality care and the support, energy and inspiration they need. Macmillan is delighted to sponsor the 2023 RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Cancer Nurse Award and is delighted to be able to celebrate the achievements of the entire nursing workforce across Northern Ireland.



## Northern Ireland Ambulance Service

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service exists to improve the health and well-being of the people of Northern Ireland. We apply the highest levels of knowledge and skill to preserve life, prevent deterioration and promote recovery. We touch lives at times of basic human need when care and compassion are what matter most. Our dedicated, committed and highly skilled staff work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to ensure that our patients receive the best possible care.



## Belfast Health and Social Care Trust      Northern Health and Social Care Trust Southern Health and Social Care Trust      South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Western Health and Social Care Trust

In 2020, the nursing profession was due to celebrate the year of the Nurse and Midwife, which also marked 200 years since the birth of Florence Nightingale. In recognition of this important event, the Directors of Nursing in the five health and social care trusts created an award to recognise nurses and midwives in leadership roles, at lead level, who have demonstrated a passion for developing their leadership, professionalism, innovation and creativity alongside effective influencing skills. The five health and social care trusts provide integrated health and social care services across Northern Ireland. Each trust manages and administers hospitals, the delivery of health care in community settings, health centres, residential homes, day centres and other health and social care facilities, providing a wide range of services. The Director of Nursing of each trust is responsible and accountable for the delivery of nursing and midwifery care and the RCN is grateful to them for supporting the Directors of Nursing Award.

# STUDENT AWARD

Sponsored by the Queen's University of Belfast

Judges: Professor Karen McCutcheon, The Queen's University of Belfast; Simon Higgs, RCN Northern Ireland Board



**Grace McAleer**  
The Open University

Grace is a final year pre-registration nursing student and her nomination focuses upon her commitment to addressing the gap in health care provision for people in Northern Ireland impacted by female genital mutilation [FGM]. Her nominator explains how Grace epitomises the values of person-centred care, compassion and concern for an under-served population, displaying leadership qualities, resourcefulness and courage. Grace, of her own initiative, successfully applied for an RCN Northern Ireland Gabrielle Award bursary. This provides nursing students with the opportunity to explore an issue about which they are passionate. She set out to enhance her own knowledge so she could share with fellow students an understanding of the issue and improve the care of people affected by FGM. The award bursary enabled Grace to attend a conference, receive training, and visit a specialist FGM clinic in London to shadow clinical experts. Grace researched the associated challenges in relation to cervical cancer screening and explored health literacy information needs and health professionals' cultural competency in FGM. Grace is planning an awareness event for nursing and social work students from all three Northern Ireland universities. Passionate in developing her knowledge of FGM and keen to explore the Northern Ireland context, Grace has reached out to the Public Health Agency to enhance her understanding of related policy, population health needs and service provision. Her aim is to become a link nurse and staff educator in FGM, and to build her skills and experience within women's health to help ensure equality of FGM service provision for non-pregnant women in Northern Ireland as across the rest of the UK and Ireland. The judging panel commended Grace's passion, knowledge and understanding, as well as her commitment to changing practice.



**Tracy Miller**  
Ulster University

Tracy is a third year pre-registration adult nursing student. She believes that nursing staff have a duty to challenge discriminatory behaviour, advocate for those in their care, and lead by example in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. Tracy recognised that there is a large proportion of the LGBTQ+ community who remain unsupported or excluded. This led her to consider how she could help to address this. Tracy organised a webinar to raise awareness of how nursing practice can impact upon the LGBTQ+ community. It focused on personal and professional experiences, allowing each speaker to share their own story. Students found the seminar invaluable and many admitted that it had helped transform their understanding of the challenges encountered by members of the LGBTQ+ community. One student commented how the webinar "has broadened my views and made me think of ways to change my practice to ensure these individuals receive the same level of care as everyone else". During her practice learning experience with a school nursing team, Tracy met a transgender student who attended a drop-in clinic. This student was struggling with their gender identity. Tracy designed a series of fact sheets explaining relevant terminology and providing information on LGBTQ+ youth support services, training programmes and workshops for schools, and counselling services. Feedback has been exceptional, with one nurse commending the ways in which the fact sheets have enabled her to understand the problems faced by young people and another commenting that Tracy's initiative has enabled them to promote more trusting relationships. The judging panel was impressed with Tracy's passion for and commitment to enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion.

# NURSING RESEARCH AWARD

Sponsored by Ulster University

Judges: Professor Tanya McCance, Ulster University; Gillian McCorkell, RCN Northern Ireland Research and Quality Network; Andrew Hamill, RCN Northern Ireland Board



**Martina Galeotti**  
Lecturer  
The Queen's University of Belfast

Martina observed how women are at risk of being marginalised after miscarriage in hospital settings but also how health professionals often lack the training and resources to deliver appropriate care. There is a lack of evidence exploring how best to meet the needs of those who experience miscarriage and Martina's study aimed to address this. It involved a scoping review, a survey of 723 women who experienced miscarriage in the last five years in Northern Ireland, 20 semi-structured interviews with women, and written narrative accounts from eight women and 25 health professionals. Interaction with health professionals, treatment and the hospital environment all influence women's experience of miscarriage and their subsequent well-being. Health practitioners require support to enable them to deliver clear information and ensure women are given enough time to absorb the news. Staff should acknowledge both the physical and emotional dimension of miscarriage to ensure that women's care needs are met. Women expressed the need to receive clear information on the diagnosis and ensure they are always up-to date with their care. Health practitioners do not always feel comfortable in emotionally supporting women experiencing miscarriage and participants unanimously agreed they were not adequately trained in pregnancy loss. Martina identified the need to provide practical information on the symptoms of miscarriage and for staff to ensure women are signposted to services such as bereavement midwives and support groups. Martina's findings have been widely disseminated, including through an educational resource that now forms part of the evidence-based nursing module at Queen's. Her research also featured in a staff development workshop funded by the Public Health Agency and sponsored by Queen's.



**Angela McKeever**  
Macmillan service improvement lead, North West Cancer Centre  
Western Health and Social Care Trust

As a clinical nurse specialist in head and neck oncology since 2012, Angela was passionate about improving care for this vulnerable patient group and their families. She therefore resolved to explore this area further as part of her self-funded MSc research project. Angela's study aimed to explore perceptions about the development of an online resource to inform decision-making and provide post-treatment support for patients with head and neck cancer, and their relatives. Her research methodology included a series of one-to-one interviews in one health and social care trust in Northern Ireland. Angela was able to demonstrate the importance of readily accessible and person-centred information in enabling patients and their families to understand the journey ahead, as well as promoting decision-making and coping. Equally, family members need information, knowledge and support to equip them for a new role as care providers. Angela's research indicates that, in an era of e-health and internet access, there is a need for high quality online patient and family-centred information to promote shared decision-making, self-management, and coping from diagnosis to living with and beyond cancer. Angela is keen to help empower health care professionals through dissemination of her findings to equip them with the knowledge required to provide better support to family members. Her findings have also been presented at a range of local, regional and international meetings and conferences. Angela's nominator praises her dedication and passion, commenting: "She is part of the growing generation of nurses who combine both academic and clinical skills to shape and deliver responsive and high-quality evidence-based care".

# DIRECTORS OF NURSING AWARD

Sponsored by the HSC trusts

Judges: David Robinson, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust; Heather Trouton, Southern Health and Social Care Trust; Siobhan Donald, RCN Northern Ireland Board



**Cathy Glass**

Nursing service manager: trauma, orthopaedics and fractures  
Western Health and Social Care Trust

Cathy's nomination focuses on her exceptional commitment to improving and developing services for people requiring orthopaedic surgery, either electively or as the result of trauma. She has been instrumental in securing investment that has enabled her to develop the service and improve nurse staffing levels, all of which have contributed to enhanced outcomes for patients. Cathy has also collaborated with other services to develop care pathways that have improved access to timely and appropriate patient care. She has secured investment in practice education and quality improvement to support learning and development and thereby enhanced the recruitment and retention of staff within orthopaedic services. Cathy leads and represents the Western Trust across many regional workstreams aimed at improving access to orthopaedic services. She has worked relentlessly to maximise the use of available resources, particularly through the new day case theatres at Altnagelvin Area Hospital, and through the development of out-patient services throughout the trust. Cathy's nominator highlights how she cares deeply about patients, colleagues and the unit, adding: "Cathy has been instrumental in resetting the service. Her professionalism, knowledge, and passion for trauma and orthopaedic nursing is greatly admired and respected by all her nursing, medical and manager colleagues. A colleague comments: "Cathy has always made time for all of the staff and is very approachable. She is patient-centred and has been a strong advocate for patients. I particularly admire her persistence and resilience in such tough times that we face." The judging panel described Cathy as "an excellent role model" and commended her patient-centred approach to her role and responsibilities.



**Laura Spiers**

Children and young people services governance co-ordinator  
Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Throughout Laura's career, and through her completion of the Global Nightingale Leadership Programme, she has developed her specialist knowledge and skills to become a strong voice for patient safety and quality within children and young people's services. Following completion of the programme, Laura moved to her current role, in which she has demonstrated her ability to engage with stakeholders to influence strategic planning, service improvement and enhanced health outcomes for children and young people. Laura demonstrates a passion for collective leadership and learning from the experience of others to inform patient safety improvements. She identified, through engagement with parents, that recognising and responding to parental concern is often a missed opportunity in the early detection of the deteriorating child. Laura used this feedback to develop a training package for health care professionals which was commended when she presented it regionally. She has also developed and implemented an accountability and assurance framework for children's services. During the pandemic, Laura developed and delivered an online training programme for nurses who were required to move across service areas. This focused on key clinical and professional skills. She also facilitated training in recognising and responding to the acutely unwell child, and competency assessments for staff undertaking clinical observations in primary care. Her nominator comments: "Laura consistently demonstrates the ability to work collaboratively to promote a person-centred and evidence-based approach to practice, with the ability to encourage professional behaviours and to challenge when safety, quality or experience is compromised." The judging panel was impressed with Laura's passion, drive and commitment, as well as her capacity to motivate and inspire.

# HEALTH CARE SUPPORT WORKER AWARD

Sponsored by Liverpool Victoria

Judges: Dennis Greer, RCN Trade Union Committee; Eileen Dunlop; Anne Campbell, RCN Northern Ireland Board



**Julie Dudgeon**

Health care support worker  
Southern Health and Social Care Trust

The unrelenting pressures under which hospital emergency departments operate are well documented. As a long-serving emergency department health care support worker at Craigavon Area Hospital, Julie's dedication has a positive impact on all those who have the pleasure of working with her. Colleagues describe her as the heart and soul of the department and explain how she is a great support to registered nurses in a challenging situation. Julie has extended her skill set both to develop herself and to support the team and department. She has acquired a range of advanced clinical skills, such as venepuncture, cannulation, urine testing, monitoring blood sugars and ECG recording. Julie's nominator praises her understanding of patient privacy and dignity, as well as her unrelenting advocacy on behalf of patients and their families. With an increasing number of older people attending the emergency department, Julie ensures that these patients are cared for in a professional and respectful manner, understanding and providing for all of their physical and emotional needs. She was recently faced with a member of the public who experienced a cardiac arrest outside the hospital environment and was unresponsive. Through her training and experience, Julie was able to deliver life-saving CPR before the patient arrived at the local emergency department. Her nominator says: "Julie is a role model, not just for health care support workers but for qualified staff. She is a patient's champion and always delivers high standards of patient care in the most professional and respectful manner." The judging panel commended Julie's commitment to providing excellent care, her commitment to her own continuing development and the quality of her decision-making.



**Ryan McIlvenna**

Health care assistant  
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Ryan is a mental health care assistant with 30 years' experience in providing safe and effective care to people with mental health problems. He is very passionate about his role, always keen to learn new ideas and make changes that will benefit patients. Ryan works in the psychiatric intensive care unit for male patients at Holywell Hospital near Antrim. Recently, he took up the role of activity nurse and has excelled in his new responsibilities, making a big difference to patients' day to day lives and helping to minimise the use of restrictive practices by providing alternatives when patients present with challenging behaviours. His role involves offering patients meaningful activities throughout the week, with a timetabled calendar of group activities. Ryan ensures that all patients are assessed on admission to establish their preferred options of meaningful activities. This involves a commitment to ensuring, as far as possible, that all activities on the calendar cater for the assessed needs of patients. Some of the innovative activities that Ryan has introduced have now been implemented by other nursing staff. This has led to a decrease in incidents of violence and aggression, as well as a reduction in the use of rapid tranquillisation and patient seclusion. Ryan's nominator references his commitment to ensuring that support, empathy, understanding and care bring happiness to patients' lives, with very positive feedback having been received from patients, carers and staff colleagues alike. The judging panel noted and commended Ryan's ability to plan ahead and his ability to build strong trust and rapport with patients.

# PUBLIC HEALTH AWARD

Sponsored by the Public Health Agency

Judges: Heather Reid, Public Health Agency; Brige Quinn, RCN Northern Ireland Board Chair; Andrew Doherty, RCN Northern Ireland Board



## Bronagh Mulholland

Specialist community health nurse for minority ethnic communities  
Southern Health and Social Care Trust

In March last year, Bronagh assumed responsibility for responding to the health needs of Ukrainian refugees who were moving into the Southern Trust area. Her experience and knowledge of working with marginalised groups, coupled with her calm and sensitive approach, placed Bronagh in an ideal position to identify and prioritise the needs of this population at an early stage in the crisis. Bronagh has since supported nearly 700 refugees, helping them to register with a GP and complete initial health screening, as well as responding to their urgent health and social care needs. As a skilled trauma-informed practitioner, Bronagh not only ensured the early identification of physical health needs but also responded to the impact of trauma and the resulting emotional and mental health impact upon families who had experienced distress and separation. Her expertise has contributed to a smoother transition into the community and significant improvements in the experiences of refugees. She regularly liaises with a range of public services and statutory agencies to enhance support for Ukrainian people in their daily lives. Bronagh has also helped to identify and support those who have experienced exploitation. Through her commitment and determination, she has reached an agreement with the PSNI human trafficking and exploitation branch to reduce the risk of exploitation to Ukrainian refugees. Bronagh's nominator explains: "She brings her knowledge and experience, alongside relevant evidence and a research base, to reduce barriers to access to health care and other services. Her contribution influences both how we deliver services and review the effectiveness of how we do this."



## Tanya Zuliani

Specialist community public health nurse for BAME communities

## Jane Ferguson

Specialist nurse  
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

The Northern Ireland New Entrant Service [NINES] is a nurse-led service providing confidential health advice, health promotion and holistic assessment and screening for people who are new to Northern Ireland and not already registered with a GP. Tanya's role encompasses both NINES and specialist community public health nursing. She supports children, families, and pregnant women by providing targeted health promotion, advice and information. This includes family health assessment, support to access services, referral where required, signposting, and the use of interpreters. Tanya, supported by Jane, has researched the needs of asylum seekers and refugees entering Northern Ireland. They have developed teaching packs to raise awareness of the reasons why people leave their country of origin, the challenges they encounter and the needs that must be addressed on arrival. The number of new entrants to the Belfast Trust area has increased ten-fold since 2016. Accordingly, the delay in families accessing key services has grown significantly. Recognising the importance of meeting the needs of this vulnerable group, Jane and Tanya developed the NINES family help service. This supports families and pregnant women to access services that can improve health outcomes and strengthen safeguarding. They worked with a range of services to develop a fortnightly one-stop clinic at which newly-arrived families are assessed and referred to the services they require. This opened last December and has been remarkably effective. It has reduced the length of time for families waiting to access services from up to six months to six weeks. Jane and Tanya plan to add vaccinations, midwifery and mental health services to the services already provided. In the words of their nominator: "Their contribution to public health within Belfast cannot be overstated".

# INDEPENDENT SECTOR NURSING AWARD

Sponsored by Balmoral Healthcare

Judges: Katy Renwick, Department of Health; Kieran McCormick, Balmoral Healthcare; Anne Campbell, RCN Northern Ireland Board



## Linda Graham

Regional manager  
Spa Nursing Home Group

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted a renewed focus upon co-production and co-design between the Department of Health and the independent sector in Northern Ireland. Linda embraced the opportunity to apply her expertise and passion in order to generate improvements that have benefitted patients and staff. She was closely involved with the Enhanced Clinical Care Framework [ECCF] established by the Department of Health in 2021 and co-chaired its sub-group on workforce planning. This involved the testing of an acuity tool for the independent sector, enhanced training and education, a staffing model, and an independent sector career pathway. The final ECCF project references prevention, anticipatory care, self-management and early intervention, urgent and emergency care, and palliative and end of life care. Her nominator describes Linda as an ambassador for the sector and praises her capacity to develop innovative quality improvement initiatives and influence on behalf of the nursing profession and patients. She is involved in joint working across the UK and Ireland on the development of an acuity tool for the sector and represents the independent sector on the Department of Health Nursing and Midwifery Task Group workstream on workforce stabilisation. She now co-chairs the Delivering Care phase 8 work on a safe staffing model for the independent sector. Linda's nominator says: "She is a reflective practitioner, continually adapting the service to ensure patients' feedback is central to the care provided. Linda coaches, mentors and develops staff to reach their full potential. She is an inspirational leader who empowers nurses to reflect and develop. Her compassion, professionalism, and vision for improving standards of care are fundamental to her as a nurse."



## Connie Connolly

Registered nurse manager  
Life and Time Nursing Agency

Life and Time Nursing Agency is a charity providing home-based end of life care in the South Down area. Connie has been nominated by the son of a patient who was cared for by Connie and her team before his death from liver cancer in 2020. The nominator describes how Connie was the nursing lead within the informal multi-disciplinary committee that came together after recognising the need within their community for the provision of additional end of life care. This rapid response nursing is provided by skilled health care professionals, based within the community they serve, and who are on-call to help with symptom control and family support overnight in the patient's home. When the Life and Time Nursing Agency was first established, it covered three localities but now serves six areas across South Down, with plans to extend to more in the coming year. The nominator explains how, during the final weeks of his father's life, he received a home visit or phone call every night. If his father needed pain relief, this would be administered right away. The nominator points out the value of a locally-based service, adding: "As a family, we know these people, so they are aware of the nursing needs of the patient and the family. Without their support, we could not have cared for my late father in the way we did." He concludes: "Daddy passed away with dignity, surrounded by family and friends and the dedicated professionals of Life and Time. Daddy always said: 'It is nice to know someone cares!' and we know that Life and Time cared for us all."

# CHIEF NURSING OFFICER RISING STAR AWARD

Sponsored by the Department of Health

Judges: Mary Frances McManus, Department of Health; Robert Sowney, RCN Fellow; Linsey Sheerin, RCN Northern Ireland Board



## Sarah Richmond

Staff nurse  
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Sarah joined the urgent and emergency care team as a newly-registered nurse in September 2021, having previously undertaken a practice placement in the emergency care village at the Royal Victoria Hospital. The short stay unit within the emergency care village can be a very challenging area in which to work. A high number of patients present during a mental health crisis and often struggle with addiction issues. Sarah's compassion and ability to recognise that individual patient needs are sometimes best met in different ways means that patients feel safe, listened to and valued. This is something that many of them may not have felt for a very long time. Sarah has taken every opportunity to expand her knowledge and skill set over the past 18 months. She has also developed her leadership and management skills and acts as a positive role model for her colleagues. Sarah has sometimes found herself to be one of the most senior staff within the team but has always embraced this as a learning opportunity, for example by identifying the need for a more robust referral process, which has now been successfully implemented. Sarah has mentored an Open University management student who subsequently asked to return to the unit as a staff nurse because of her positive experience working there. Her nominator says: "Sarah always comes to work with a positive attitude and a smile on her face. The impact this has on the entire team and patients cannot be underestimated. It was very clear from our first encounter that Sarah was passionate and driven about her chosen career in adult nursing." The judging panel noted Sarah's communication skills and her strong awareness of her colleagues.

# CHIEF NURSING OFFICER RISING STAR AWARD

Sponsored by the Department of Health



## Lucy Smyth

Community staff nurse  
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

According to her nominator, Lucy demonstrates "an amazing holistic person-centred approach by being attuned to patients' individual and family needs". She is adept at providing safe and effective care, identifying that which may seem trivial to some but can make an immense difference to a patient's quality of life. Her nomination cites a number of examples where Lucy displayed these qualities. They embrace a woman who had become housebound due to her own embarrassment at the visibility of tumours on her scalp, a stroke patient who appeared to be disinterested in her condition and was unable to monitor her blood sugar levels and self-administer insulin, and a patient who self-neglected due to alcoholism and was consequently non-compliant with his own leg ulcer management. In all these cases, Lucy demonstrated sensitivity, innovation and advanced skills in promoting self-care, listening to the patient in order to identify what was important to them and then working in partnership to help them address the challenges they faced. Lucy has developed a checklist for the team to help colleagues engage in a regional quality improvement initiative for palliative care. Her nominator observes how well Lucy interacts with colleagues and how her drive to enhance patient care inspires the wider team. She comments: "I often see staff asking her for advice and having reflective discussions on individual patients. She is a true role model. It's a pleasure to observe how she has grown in confidence and developed her personal leadership skills as a rising star within district nursing." The judging panel commended the clear evidence Lucy presented of how she has improved patient care and experience.



## Nathan Weir

Staff nurse  
Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Nathan joined the trust in 2017 as a peer support worker and began The Open University pre-registration nursing programme one year later. The Bluestone unit in Craigavon has historically struggled to retain peer support workers due to a lack of support for and understanding of this valuable role. Nathan, through his own experience as a peer support worker, is now leading a relaunch of the peer support in-reach team. This will promote the integration of lived experience with acute care. By providing face-to-face emotional support and encouragement through a peer support hub, Nathan is promoting the message that there is hope for recovery. His nominator explains that Nathan is "passionate about how lived experience offers a unique perspective that other professionals may not have and is an inspiration to us all". He has developed a range of activities to strengthen the quality of patient care and enhance the compassionate service provided. These include accessing trust transport to enable patients to attend wellness centres, an increase in psychoeducation group work to address anxiety, addiction and depression, and day trips and walking groups to promote physical activity and reduce the risk of patients becoming institutionalised. Community peer support workers are now able to offer additional support within Bluestone to patients with whom they already have a rapport. Nathan is helping Bluestone to become a therapeutic community, providing peer support from the point of admission to discharge. The judging panel praised Nathan's clinical skills and his determination in advocating for patients.

# TEAM MANAGER AWARD

Sponsored by HSC Clinical Education Centre and HSC Business Services Organisation

Judges: Heather Finlay, HSC Clinical Education Centre; Patrick Gallagher, HSC Clinical Education Centre; Andrew Doherty, RCN Northern Ireland Board



**Helen Manson**

Haemophilia nurse specialist  
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Helen practises in the regional haemophilia centre at Belfast City Hospital. This is a specialist unit where patients affected by inherited and acquired bleeding disorders receive co-ordinated care from a dedicated multi-professional team, two of whom have separately nominated Helen for this award. Under her leadership, service improvement has been significant. She initiated the use of virtual clinics, which later became standard practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, Helen is often contacted for advice on how to set up virtual clinics and has given innumerable conference presentations on the theme. Helen has produced a range of student and patient information packs, and initiated a dedicated app for patients. During the pandemic, she maintained patients' access to treatment by establishing a home delivery service using local taxi firms. One of Helen's nominators references her willingness to embrace experimentation and challenge the status quo in order to improve patient care. The other describes her as "the glue that holds us all together", praising her calm, caring, knowledgeable and insightful nature. Helen is constantly looking for ways to improve the working lives of her colleagues, understanding the strengths of all the team members and ensuring that these are nurtured. In the words of one nominator: "Helen leads by example. She inspires us to be the best of ourselves. She sets and expects high standards but is always right there with acknowledgement of a job well done, praise where it is due, and positive support in difficult circumstances. I feel incredibly lucky to have her as a manager."



**Lisa Spence and Anne Baird**

Urology sisters  
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Lisa and Anne are sisters in the urology service at the Belfast City Hospital. During the last three years, both have been asked to set up new services and lead new teams in different environments and on different sites, with limited resources. Anne established and led a urology hub in the day procedure unit during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the post-pandemic return of services to the Belfast City Hospital Tower Block, she transformed urology day care services into an ambulatory unit. Anne introduced new services to increase diagnostic and treatment capacity, as well as providing an alternative pathway to avoid hospital admission or emergency department attendance. Lisa led her own team when it was transferred to the Royal Victoria Hospital. She was then handpicked to lead a multi-specialty surgery service at the Belfast City Hospital as the service recovered from COVID-19, before re-establishing the in-patient 16-bed urology ward. In doing so, Lisa developed and supported the competencies of twenty internationally-educated nurses, enabling them to take up registered nursing posts. Lisa and Anne not only provided stability and leadership at a time of great uncertainty but also led changes to enhance the culture and effectiveness of the service. As a result, other nursing staff now seek opportunities to work in their teams. Nurses who had retired or otherwise left the service have now returned, whilst others transferred from their pre-pandemic specialties to work alongside Lisa and Anne. Their nominator points out that they lead by example in providing a supportive workplace that enables nursing staff to deliver the highest possible standards of care.

# PRIMARY CARE NURSING AWARD

Sponsored by General Practice Federations, Northern Ireland

Judges: Angela McLernon, GP Federations, Northern Ireland; Marian Robertson, GP Federations Northern Ireland; Edna Grant, RCN Northern Ireland Board

2023 NURSE OF THE YEAR AWARDS PROGRAMME



**Lisa Giltrap**

Senior mental health practitioner  
North Down GP Federation

The Department of Health strategy Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together sets out a vision for an enhanced primary care service in Northern Ireland. This has led to the development of multi-disciplinary teams including community nurses, social workers, physiotherapists and mental health teams, working together to deliver a population health management approach to local people. Lisa is a mental health nurse and an independent and supplementary prescriber. She was the first senior mental health practitioner in the North Down GP Federation and therefore has been a trailblazer for mental health practitioners within primary care multi-disciplinary teams. With a background in mental health in-patient services for older people, Lisa utilised her professional nursing skills and networks to deliver mental health assessments and brief interventions across the lifespan. She has developed positive working relationships with secondary care colleagues, which ensure that patients can access the right service in a timely manner. Lisa discusses the prescribing options available with patients in order to optimise the administration of medicines within a person-centred model of care and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions. She has proactively developed strong inter-agency relations and networks across the locality, ensuring that patients can engage with and be supported by a range of voluntary and community-based activities that support and maintain positive mental health and well-being. Her nominator says: "Lisa demonstrates her skill, knowledge, and compassion for patients on a daily basis. She makes a significant contribution to deliver services to improve access to primary care for patients who experience mental health problems." The senior GP commented: "Lisa's contribution has been transformative and absolutely confirmed the value of the mental health multi-disciplinary team within our GP practice".



**Lynda Haire**

Advanced nurse practitioner  
Derry GP Federation

Lynda works in Dunamanagh Medical Practice, a rural practice staffed by male GPs. She was concerned that there was no scope for female patients to access a female GP when experiencing symptoms or concerns regarding the menopause. Following discussions with the GPs, they expressed a lack of confidence in prescribing hormone replacement therapy [HRT]. Furthermore, there was no follow-up system in place and no service offered if a woman wanted to talk to someone about the menopause. After discussions with members of the practice team, Lynda secured ringfenced time to audit the existing practice and support provided to women presenting with menopausal symptoms against the 2019 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence [NICE] guidelines and then develop an action plan to improve the service offered. She identified the need to introduce a dedicated clinic for those presenting with symptoms, alongside the development of an evidence-based template on HRT prescribing and management. This has made a significant contribution to patient safety and standards of care. Lynda has organised events to bring local women together to learn from and share their experiences in a safe and informal environment. She established and leads a weekly clinic dedicated to women's health issues, whilst patients undertaking HRT now receive systematic medication reviews. Lynda's initiative has ensured that women have the opportunity to direct their own care and gain a greater understanding of what they are experiencing, ensuring they are more informed about the choices available to them. Access to the prescribing template and symptom checker devised by Lynda has now been requested by a number of local practices with a view to implementation. The judging panel noted Lynda's creative thinking and the significant impact she has had on promoting high standards of care for women.

# LEARNING IN PRACTICE AWARD

Sponsored by The Open University

Judges: John D'Arcy, The Open University; Stephanie Foster, The Open University; Edna Grant, RCN Northern Ireland Board



**Julie Baxter**  
Deputy sister  
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Julie completed a pressure sore prevention and management course at the Queen's University of Belfast in 2019. Her nominator says: "I believe Julie should be recognised for an award, as I have never before in 30 years of nursing seen information brought back to the clinical setting and shared with so much enthusiasm and to so many people. All the information that was learnt from the course was brought back to the ward setting and then put into a poster." Julie has spent much of her own time designing posters, booklets, stickers and pens to help staff with the staging, recording, management and prevention of pressure sores. The posters have been widely distributed and displayed in many different areas throughout various HSC trusts. They have also been promoted by the Public Health Agency on its website. Julie has carried out teaching sessions in her own time and hopes to carry out more in the future. She remains passionate, enthusiastic and approachable and will find time to share her knowledge with anyone who needs her help. Recently Julie promoted a 'Love the skin' theme and devised a card which was placed on the medicine trolleys, a reflection of how she is always thinking of new ideas to maintain interest in this very important topic. Julie's nominator adds: "She is such an asset for our ward and we are now much more knowledgeable about good skincare, use of devices and asking for help in assessing patients". The judging panel noted Julie's personal drive and the excellent feedback she has received from staff and students, along with the ways in which she has helped colleagues develop their confidence in pressure sore prevention and management.



**Una Hughes**  
Children's training co-ordinator  
Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Una's nomination focuses upon a project that she has led to promote competence and confidence in caring for children with complex health care needs. The project involves an online training and competency platform that Una has developed to support the safe delegation of nursing care to non-registered staff and parents/carers. The aim of the project is to ensure that the just-in-time training required for the safe care of children with nursing needs at home, in school and in community settings is engaging, easily accessible and promotes integration. This project transforms the competency-based training for carers of children who require interventions such as enteral feeding, tracheostomy care and home ventilation, and is available 24/7. It will help carers to acquire appropriate knowledge, clinical skills, competence and confidence in delivering delegated care, specific to each child's needs. This is an inspirational project that embraces technological innovation and brings services closer to the home, in line with the original core principles of HSC transformation. It is responsive to the needs of carers and will expedite discharge and the integration of children within community settings. By promoting their full participation in family, school and community life, Una's project will have a significant impact on the lives of children with complex needs and their families. As her nominator explains: "Una is passionate and committed to her role and always exploring ways to improve learning in practice to enhance patient safety and experience by supporting staff, families, children and young people". The judging panel was impressed with the ways in which Una provides accessible training for all, as well as the outstanding feedback and evaluation she has received.

# PATIENT'S CHOICE AWARD

Sponsored by the Patient and Client Council

Judges: Katherine McElroy, Patient and Client Council; Keith Wright, Patient and Client Council; Maureen Dolan, RCN Northern Ireland Board



**Karen Harper and Helen McCormick**  
Lung clinical nurse specialists  
Western Health and Social Care Trust

Karen and Helen are based in the North West Cancer Centre and were nominated by a patient who was also a senior colleague in the centre and had been diagnosed with lung cancer earlier this year. She explains how Karen and Helen supported her and her family through this life-changing diagnosis. The patient describes how they guided her through diagnostic procedures, always with a person-centred approach and how they listened to what mattered to her at each stage of the journey as part of a holistic needs assessment. Referrals were made to support the patient's family, as her primary concern was how she would share the traumatic news with her children. At each appointment, Karen and Helen have been at her side, quietly observing for signs of when support was required, reinforcing information in a manageable way, and knowing when silence was all that was required. At her first chemotherapy session, Karen arrived with gifts to help the patient through the 10-hour treatment. She was available at the end of the session to advise how to access help, and to check that a safe care pathway was in place. The patient concludes: "I am in awe of how professionalism and compassion has been demonstrated towards me in what must be a very challenging and difficult time for both nurses. The kindness, love and compassion shown to me in abundance by Karen, Helen and the team will help me navigate these new steps, I hope, for a little more time." The judging panel was impressed with the respectful ways in which Karen and Helen involved the family in decision-making and put the interests of the patient first.



**Barbara Johnston**  
Ward sister  
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Barbara has been nominated by the mother of a man who died aged 43 after a long illness and a year of being an in-patient in the Royal Victoria Hospital. She describes Barbara as skilled, knowledgeable and compassionate, having touched her life and those of many others. The nominator explains how Barbara's positivity radiates onto her colleagues and patients the moment she steps onto the ward, creating a sense of safety and compassion. She says: "Barbara treats her patients as if they are her family. She had my most precious gift in her care and treated him like her own. My son always had a smile on his face when he talked about Barbara. The simple gestures of being present, making time and those all-important cups of tea were sometimes better than all the expensive treatments. This is a skill that can't be taught. It comes from the heart." The nominator describes how Barbara played a significant role as her son's advocate, liaising on his behalf with the wider health care team and ensuring that his care was patient-centred. This helped to reduce his anxieties and allowed him to make informed choices about his care. Barbara ensured that the patient's wishes were respected by arranging for him to receive end of life care in the familiar ward environment. The nominator concludes: "Barbara gave us the opportunity to say goodbye in the right way. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank her and appreciate her love and care for our precious son during his final journey in life. Those memories will remain with us forever." The judging panel commended the outstanding care provided by Barbara and her skilled advocacy on behalf of the patient.

# DEFENCE NURSING RESERVIST AWARD

Sponsored by Defence Relationship Management, Ministry of Defence

Judges: Athene Gordon, Defence Relationship Management; Conor McDowell, RCN Northern Ireland Board



Defence  
Relationship  
Management



## Rebecca Smyth

Trainee advanced clinical practitioner/emergency care nursing officer  
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust/204 (North Irish) Field Hospital

Captain Rebecca Smyth is currently completing her advanced clinical practitioner qualification in emergency care. She also serves with the Army Medical Services as an emergency care nursing officer with the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps and 204 (North Irish) Field Hospital. Rebecca is a dedicated and inspiring officer, always ensuring that her staff are at the centre of every decision. She plays a leading role in recruitment and engagement for the unit. Rebecca achieved a certificate of efficiency from the commanding officer for the current training year and committed a significant amount of time to ensuring that her defence operational nursing competencies are complete. This enables her to deploy to any austere environment in the world. Rebecca supported the emergency care team at a recent exercise by providing in-depth training sessions, equipment familiarisation, mentorship and support. Throughout the exercise, the team displayed capability, solidarity and exceptional clinical practice. Rebecca also led a largely female and predominantly nursing team during an Army Medical Services tactical training exercise. This three-day annual military skills competition consisted of 13 activities, 16-hour days and sleeping under the stars. Under Rebecca's leadership, her team won the best reserve team award and achieved third place overall. Her nominator says: "Rebecca demonstrates selfless commitment through her support for others and exemplary standards of practice and education in both her military and civilian roles."



## Christopher Finnegan

Advanced nurse practitioner/nursing officer  
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust/204 (North Irish) Field Hospital

Captain Christopher Finnegan is an advanced clinical practitioner in emergency care, a demanding role in a relentless environment. He also serves as a reserve nursing officer with 204 (North Irish) Field Hospital and the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps. Understanding the extreme pressures within emergency care, Christopher supported the directing team at a hospital exercise, where he facilitated command teams and emergency teams to develop their understanding of the role expected of them in an austere environment. He created clinical scenarios, led feedback sessions, developed effective working relationships with the team leaders, encouraged continued professional development, and created a learning culture. Christopher recently deployed with the Army Medical Services on a United Nations mission as the nurse in charge of the emergency department. He was tasked to deliver NHS level care in a canvas tent, alongside a mobile infantry battlegroup, in extreme heat, sleeping at night beside a vehicle on a bed of sand for up to five weeks at a time. Christopher's nominator explains how he was integral to the success of this operation, commenting: "He developed processes allowing the safe transfer of patients through and between treatment facilities. This was critical to the safety and high standards of the patient pathway." Christopher has invested knowledge and time with candidates undergoing recruitment by providing online and face-to-face training, as well as clinical training for unit personnel. His nominator describes Christopher as "a true team player, who willingly assists with teaching commitments, always willing to go above and beyond, very reliable and capable of working independently and under extreme pressure".

# CANCER NURSE AWARD

Sponsored by Macmillan Cancer Support

Judges: Nuala Harraghy, Macmillan Cancer Support; Lorna Nevin, Public Health Agency; Lynn Woolsey, RCN Northern Ireland Board



## Sarah McCauley

Macmillan advanced nurse practitioner  
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Sarah was appointed as the first oncology nurse practitioner [ONP] within the South Eastern Trust in 2018. Her nominator describes her as an exceptional role model and explains how she has broken new ground with the development of a nurse-led systemic anti-cancer treatment [SACT] prescribing service. Sarah independently assesses and prescribes SACT for patients, with over 2,300 prescribing episodes and almost 700 nurse-led oncology reviews achieved since the inception of the service. She delivers holistic, person-centred care at a time in a patient's cancer journey when they are often vulnerable and frightened. Treatment decisions are made in partnership with patients, using shared decision-making and co-producing care to ensure the best health and well-being outcomes. Sarah is establishing new ways of working which will further streamline services and alleviate capacity issues. She is also working on a regional project to reduce the need for hospital appointments, blood tests and assessments for patients on palliative prostate SACT. Sarah's leadership and clinical credibility is demonstrated by her success in leading and implementing a number of other projects. These include the safe prescribing of SACT and the implementation of patient group directives [PGDs] for first dose intravenous antibiotics for patients with suspected neutropenic sepsis. Sarah has also had an article published in the peer-reviewed journal the British Journal of Nursing. Her nominator explains: "Sarah is a pioneer for other ONPs who join the team, assuring a robust service for patients, demonstrating professional credibility and effectively engaging with other members of the multi-disciplinary team". The judging panel commended Sarah's success in developing a nurse-led service that puts the needs of patients first and represents the epitome of good practice.



## Lisa Callendar

Teenage and young adult clinical nurse specialist  
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Lisa's nomination focuses upon the ways in which she has exceeded expectations to promote personalised care and support for teenage and young adult cancer patients. In 2017, she was appointed as the first teenage and young adult clinical nurse specialist in the South Eastern Trust, a service that she established and now leads. This service is unique as it is funded entirely by four charities; Teenage Cancer Trust, Young Lives vs Cancer, Friends of the Cancer Centre, and the Children's Cancer Unit Charity. Lisa supports and advocates for all young people aged 16 to 24 who are diagnosed with cancer. Lisa has developed evidence-based and age-appropriate personalised care and support pathways. She has successfully streamlined appointment times to allow patients to attend work or continue their education, or to mitigate for treatment side effects. Lisa advocates with employers and education providers to secure reasonable adjustments that enable young people to remain in employment or education. She supported young people to co-produce and develop an end of treatment summary alongside colleagues from the teenage and young adult team. This aims to promote independence and post-treatment autonomy. Lisa also runs a nurse-led cancer review clinic at which patients are empowered to take a more active role in their care and she delivers comprehensive cancer treatment follow-up and peer support programmes for young people. Finally, Lisa organised a bereavement support group for staff following the predicted but sudden death of a young person, which helped colleagues deal with their feelings about the patient, their diagnosis and their end of life wishes. The judging panel praised Lisa's capacity to provide age-appropriate and individualised support.

# BROWNLEE-SILVERDALE LEADERSHIP AWARD

Sponsored by Roberta Brownlee and Silverdale Care Home

Judges: Geraldine Browne, Silverdale Care Home; Paul McAleer, RCN Northern Ireland Board; Lynn Woolsey, RCN Northern Ireland Board



**Deirdre Webb**

Assistant Director of Nursing  
Public Health Agency

Deirdre is an exceptionally committed and valued nurse leader in Northern Ireland. She currently leads a team of nurse consultants who support the five Health and Social Care trusts in promoting family and public health in a regionally-consistent manner. This includes services such as health visiting, school nursing, midwifery, children with complex health needs, safeguarding children, perinatal mental health, homelessness and new entrants. Deirdre has a passion for early intervention and was responsible for the implementation of family nurse partnerships in each of the HSC trusts. These partnerships have helped to change the life course for many of the most vulnerable young people in our society by delivering a high-quality service to young teenage mothers and their families. Deirdre played a significant role in the successful implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination programme in Northern Ireland. She was also instrumental in developing services for some of the most vulnerable groups, such as the homeless population and children with complex health needs, during the early stages of the pandemic. Deirdre has risen to the challenge of ensuring the health needs of the ever-growing asylum-seeking population in Northern Ireland are adequately assessed and met. She is a strong advocate for this vulnerable group and seeks to ensure that the needs of children and their families are prioritised. Her nominator says: "Deirdre is passionate about her work and her dedication is a motivator that spreads throughout the health care system. She leads and sets direction with confidence. During times of uncertainty, she has the ability to provide a sense of security and stability."

# BROWNLEE-SILVERDALE LEADERSHIP AWARD

Sponsored by Roberta Brownlee and Silverdale Care Home

2023 NURSE OF THE YEAR AWARDS PROGRAMME



**Dawn Ferguson**

Assistant Director for Nursing and Midwifery Workforce and Education  
Southern Health and Social Care Trust

As a strong advocate for the nursing profession, Dawn has created and led numerous workforce and education initiatives to ensure high standards of patient care are delivered now and into the future. Drawing upon feedback, focus groups, and recruitment and retention workforce data analysis, Dawn directly influenced a review of the Southern Trust's preceptorship programme, resulting in enhanced support being provided to all newly-registered nurses within the trust. Her strategic leadership and collaborative working with the Southern Regional College and The Open University led to the development of a pre-registration nursing programme. This programme has created opportunities for students from the Southern Regional College to work in nursing support roles within the trust, as well as providing an alternative pathway to access nursing. This was recently recognised as an example of best practice within the Department of Health Nursing and Midwifery Retention Initiative Implementation Framework published in 2022. After successfully applying for a Martha McMenamin Memorial Scholarship, Dawn used the funding to develop three highly evaluated leadership programmes with her team. The programmes had a strong focus on practice development methodologies and created a peer support model to help develop future nurse leaders. Dawn's nominator praises her ability to harness individual and team potential and notes how she is a respected role model. She adds: "Dawn is a strong leader and sets impeccable standards. This has been demonstrated during recent personal bereavement and ill health, where Dawn led with courage, commitment and sacrifice. There is always a sense of kindness and understanding, the ability to genuinely empathise with others, and to be human when leading and supporting staff. Dawn's true commitment to her profession has directly and positively influenced nurse development and individual and team growth. She challenges perceptions in order to raise professional standards and promote patient care. Dawn displays exemplary leadership."

# RCN NORTHERN IRELAND NURSE OF THE YEAR AWARD

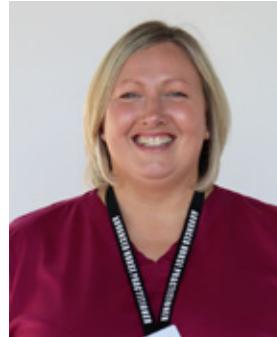
2023 NURSE OF THE YEAR  
AWARDS PROGRAMME



Judges: Mary Frances McManus, Department of Health; Linda Kelly, Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery [NIPEC]; Robert Sowney, RCN Fellow; Briege Quinn, RCN Northern Ireland Board Chair

# RCN NORTHERN IRELAND NURSE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Judges: Mary Frances McManus, Department of Health; Linda Kelly, Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery [NIPEC]; Robert Sowney, RCN Fellow; Briege Quinn, RCN Northern Ireland Board Chair



**Helen Davis**

Surgical advanced nurse practitioner  
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Helen was the first surgical advanced nurse practitioner to be appointed in Northern Ireland. She has successfully developed and embedded the role within the surgical team at Antrim Area Hospital due to her continued drive and passion, combined with her specialist knowledge and skill. Helen's nominator explains how she is highly regarded within the team and has developed strong working relationships with her nursing and medical colleagues. She was instrumental in establishing the emergency surgical unit, and subsequently has led the implementation of changes within the unit benefitting staff but more importantly improving patient experience and safety. These changes have increased efficiency by reviewing the utilisation of clinical appointments, as well as improving communication through reviewing documentation and recording, particularly in relation to patient discharge. Helen is highly focused on patient-centred care, demonstrated by working with stakeholders to agree and implement direct access to the emergency surgical unit for a patient with complex needs in order to avoid the need for regular emergency department attendance by the patient and carer. This prevented delays to treatment and thereby generated improved outcomes and experience for both the patient and their carer. She acts as an advocate for patients, considering their holistic needs and utilising her communication and advanced clinical knowledge and skills to ensure the best possible treatment. Helen has helped to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, providing alternative options to ensure safe and effective care. The judging panel commended Helen's strong nursing values, her determination to reform a previously inefficient service, and her relentless focus on improving standards of care.



**Nicola Loughlin**

Delirium nurse co-ordinator  
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Nicola has established a leading role in the development and implementation of a pioneering project to address the growing number of incidents of violence and aggression across medical wards within the trust's acute hospital settings. Initially, Nicola identified that delirium, dementia, alcohol withdrawal syndrome, alcohol-related brain injury and a learning disability were the conditions most commonly associated with these incidents. Nicola recognised the need to develop nurses' knowledge and skills and pull together existing pathways, policies and best practice advice to reduce variations in practice and eliminate gaps in treatment or care that could contribute to incidents of violence and aggression. She developed a unique platform to nurture the very best in cross-divisional working and created a comprehensive checklist for each domain. In particular, she worked to ensure that the needs of people with a learning disability are recognised and prioritised within the acute hospital setting. The checklist was piloted in four medical wards across two acute hospital sites and supported by an education package that Nicola devised. The project aimed to reduce incidents of violence and aggression by 25% within six months. However, results have shown a reduction in incidents of over 30%, with a 75% reduction in incidents related to alcohol withdrawal. Nursing staff have reported an increase in confidence, knowledge and assertiveness, and feel better equipped to engage with medical colleagues in advocating for patients and ensuring specific pathways and policies are followed. Ensuring safe, effective, timely and patient-centred care has ultimately helped to support nurses and led to an improved patient journey by minimising distress and reducing incidents of violence and aggression. The judging panel noted Nicola's compassionate approach and her commitment to improving the experience of nursing colleagues and patients alike.



**Claire Cassells**

Urology advanced nurse practitioner  
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Claire's nomination focuses upon her leadership and carving out the role of an advanced nurse practitioner within the urology service, as well as her success in modernising and reshaping how urology care is delivered. She has worked tirelessly, demonstrating advanced clinical skills and leadership, in developing a number of new nurse-led initiatives, all of which have led to more holistic person-centred care, greater efficiency and effective care delivery. Claire established an andrology clinic, in conjunction with urology consultants, cardiologists and endocrinologists, which she now runs autonomously, seeing nine new patients each week. This has significantly reduced waiting times and improved patients' quality of life and treatment options. Through her communication and negotiation skills, Claire initiated collaboration with a range of other disciplines and services to enhance standards of care and patient outcomes. She has reduced waiting times through facilitating direct post-surgery referrals from primary care and emergency departments. Claire runs two theatre lists each week, accommodating 24 patients and reducing waiting times for red flag cystoscopy investigations and further surgery or treatment. Claire's latest nurse-led initiative is an enhanced e-triage service, where urology referrals from GPs are assessed, leading to the patient either being discharged with support back to GP services or booked into an appropriate clinic, preventing unnecessary out-patient appointments. Claire has shared her evidence-based learning at local, national and international meetings, and recently secured first prize for a poster presentation at the European Association of Urology Nurses conference in Milan. The judging panel praised Claire's passion, her commitment to making changes that benefit patient care, and her strong focus on patient outcomes.



**Vicky Burns**

Lead nurse, hysteroscopy and colposcopy  
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Vicky is the first and only nurse hysteroscopist in Northern Ireland and, in the words of her nominator, is a pioneer and visionary who has championed the development of this service. Out-patient hysteroscopy is a valuable intervention in the diagnosis and treatment of gynaecological conditions. Demand for hysteroscopy services significantly outweighs existing capacity and this gap is predicted to widen due to an ageing population. The establishment of a nurse-led hysteroscopy service provides improved access to the investigation of abnormal uterine bleeding and supports targets for suspected cancer to be met. It complements the pre-existing medical model in order to enhance service provision. Vicky negotiated funding to undertake hysteroscopy training at postgraduate certificate level through Bradford University and is now a member of the British Society of Gynaecological Endoscopists. She concurrently completed a postgraduate certificate at the University of Ulster in non-medical prescribing, achieving a merit and a distinction respectively in these programmes. With Vicky's assistance, the Northern Trust became the first HSC trust to secure recurrent funding for the nurse-led hysteroscopist role, and she has been instrumental in reducing waiting times for hysteroscopy. She has adopted the national evaluation tool, which provides an annual audit of her service, to include qualitative and quantitative data. Evaluation of the service and the patient experience has been extremely positive. The enhanced hysteroscopy service developed by Vicky exemplifies the ways in which nurses across Northern Ireland are leading the implementation of strategic transformation by radically reforming the way services are designed, with a focus on prevention and early intervention, promoting positive health as well as treating ill-health. Vicky's nominator praises her unwavering determination, dynamism and positive attitude, whilst the judging panel was impressed with Vicky's strong motivation to lead and develop a new service that has significantly improved the patient experience and standards of care.

# KATHLEEN ROBB AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO NURSING

Sponsored by the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery [NIPEC]

2023 NURSE OF THE YEAR AWARDS PROGRAMME



The Kathleen Robb Award for Outstanding Contribution to Nursing is aimed at recognising exceptional service to the nursing and midwifery professions in Northern Ireland. The award is sponsored by NIPEC and the previous winners are:

- 2002 Dr Mona Grey OBE
- 2003 Miss Kathleen Robb OBE
- 2004 Dame Mary Uprichard
- 2005 John Walsh
- 2006 Professor Mary Hanratty CBE
- 2007 Kate O'Hanlon MBE
- 2008 Judith Hill CBE
- 2009 204 (North Irish) Field Hospital (Volunteers)
- 2010 Carmel Hanna
- 2011 Susan Semple
- 2012 Elizabeth Henderson OBE FRCN
- 2013 Professor Hugh McKenna CBE FRCN
- 2014 Margaret Graham
- 2015 Roberta Brownlee MBE
- 2016 Robert Sowney FRCN
- 2017 Professor Tanya McCance
- 2018 Professor Martin Bradley OBE FRCN
- 2019 Professor Kader Parahoo
- 2022 Mary Hinds





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