2019 NURSE OF THE YEAR AWARDS

AWARDS PROGRAMME
6 JUNE 2019
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, members and distinguished guests to the 2019 Nurse of the Year Awards ceremony.

As ever, these awards provide the opportunity to highlight excellence within nursing in Northern Ireland and the contribution that nurses make to the health and well-being of the people of Northern Ireland.

We find ourselves still working within the context of a political vacuum in Northern Ireland. The continuing absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly is denying our health and social care service the political and strategic leadership that it urgently requires. It also means that the capacity for decision-making, whether on safe staffing, fair pay, or the reform and modernisation of health and social care, is at best severely constrained and often entirely absent. For the sake of patients and clients, their families and carers, and our dedicated health and social care staff, we need to secure the restoration and full functioning of government as quickly as possible.

Despite the challenging environment, this year’s finalists demonstrate how nurses in Northern Ireland are leading the way in delivering high quality, innovative and person-centred care, contributing to the strategic objectives of transformation and co-production.

I would like to thank all of our sponsors. You are most welcome here tonight and I hope you will find the occasion 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 for 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.

Congratulations to all our finalists and my best wishes for an enjoyable evening.
The Open University

The Open University is sponsoring 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. Since 2008, 270 nurses have qualified with The Open University in Northern Ireland, and they are making a huge difference to patients’ lives in hospitals and communities across Northern Ireland. In 2019, The Open University celebrates 50 years of opening up education to all and sponsoring this award reflects the OU mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas.

Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board

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. This is achieved by working directly with communities, health and social care providers, and through joint commissioning with the Health and Social Care Board. The Health and Social Care Board is accountable for translating a vision for health and social care into a range of services that deliver high quality and safe outcomes for users, good value for the taxpayer and compliance with statutory obligations. The Health and Social Care Board aims to ensure that the voice of the patient and client informs commissioning decisions.

Inspire

Inspire’s vision of well-being for all is at the core of our service delivery. We provide a comprehensive range of high quality services focusing on mental health, learning disabilities and addiction. Working with people, families and communities across the island of Ireland, we take a unique ‘whole society’ approach to our work, incorporating public anti-stigma campaigns, information provision, support in schools and workplaces, crisis intervention and advocacy, a full range of supported independent living services, and counselling, mindfulness and other psychological therapies. Our social enterprise, Inspire Workplaces, is leading the way in reshaping workplace well-being through the development and delivery of our innovative Employee Resilience Programme [ERP]. Aiming to embed a culture of well-being in workplaces, our ERP approach is at the cutting edge of thinking on organisational culture and employee performance and development. Inspire is delighted and proud to be able to support the 2019 RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Inspiring Excellence in Mental Health and Learning Disability Award.

Macmillan Cancer Support

Macmillan Cancer Support in Northern Ireland provides practical and emotional support to people living with cancer, and their family and friends. Cancer nurses are at the heart of the 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. That is why Macmillan Cancer Support continues to invest in our local nursing workforce. Macmillan Cancer Support is delighted to be able to celebrate the achievements of the Northern Ireland cancer nursing workforce by sponsoring the 2019 RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Cancer Nurse Award.
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. For her outstanding leadership ability spanning some 44 years, Roberta was awarded the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Outstanding Achievement Award in 2015. 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.

Defence Medical Services

The uniformed and civilian medical and dental personnel from all three services 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 go where they are required in the UK and throughout the world. The DMS encompasses the entire medical, nursing, dental, allied health professional, paramedic and support personnel. 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 a military exercise or humanitarian mission. 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 Airforce: 502 (Ulster) Squadron.

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 Outstanding Achievement Award. 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 has been leading graduate nurse education for over 40 years and has a strong culture of scholarship and high quality teaching. In 2019, it continued to be ranked in the top fifty schools of nursing, according to the QS World Rankings for nursing and sixth in the UK. It is widely recognised for its pioneering nursing research which improves the care of patients, 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, 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 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 provides a powerful independent voice for the public. Its work is based on speaking directly to people and listening to their views and experiences of health and social care. This information is fed into the system and used by decision-makers when deciding how health and social care services are provided.

The Queen’s University of Belfast
The School of Nursing and Midwifery at the Queen’s University of Belfast is a progressive and dynamic educational environment that offers full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in all the disciplines of nursing and midwifery. The school prides itself on offering programmes that integrate theory and clinical practice, preparing students to lead and deliver high quality health care, both locally and internationally, in often the most challenging of circumstances. Programme partners include internationally-recognised clinical institutions, and ambulatory and community care services. 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
LV=, the UK’s largest friendly society with over five million members and customers, is proud to support the work of the RCN in Northern Ireland and delighted to sponsor the 2019 RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Health Care Support Worker Award. RCN members have been enjoying exclusive discounts on LV= car and home insurance for many years. Both our car and home insurance have been given a five star rating - its highest level - by independent financial information business Defaqto. For more information go to LV.com/RCN.

HSC Clinical Education Centre
The HSC Clinical Education Centre exists to provide high quality in-service education to nurses, midwives and allied health professionals employed in the HSC trusts. It also provides consultancy to a variety of other organisations from the statutory, voluntary, community and independent sectors. The centre’s key aim is to be responsive to the needs of its clients, delivering programmes that are informed by the best available evidence, maximise the use of modern educational approaches, and are delivered by highly-skilled professionally-registered teaching staff.

BLM
BLM is a leading provider of health care legal services, with over 20 years’ experience in providing services to both the private and public sectors. We have an efficient service delivery model that maximises our skills, training and intelligence to help make our customers’ lives better and more successful. It is for this reason that we are described in customer surveys and legal directories as a firm with “its finger on the pulse of the market” and as “a technical powerhouse”. We represent the best interests of health care providers and professionals requiring legal assistance during disciplinary, regulatory or criminal investigations, inquiries, inquests and clinical negligence/medical malpractice claims. We also provide proactive advice on matters such as defamation, cyber, data security and the duty of candour. Our team provides services across the UK and Ireland, offering a strong mix of specialist expertise across the health care industry. With members of the team located across England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, we have a strong national presence, together with invaluable local knowledge of coroners and health care bodies.
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

The five health and social care trusts provide integrated health and social care services across Northern Ireland. Health and social care trusts manage and administer hospitals, health centres, residential homes, day centres and other health and social care facilities. They provide a wide range of health and social care services to the communities they serve. The executive director of nursing of each trust is responsible and accountable for the delivery of nursing care and the RCN is grateful to them for their support.
Breeda Henderson
Ulster University

Breeda is a final year adult nursing pre-registration student who, in the words of her nominator, “exemplifies the qualities of a leader for the profession of nursing”. She has not only excelled academically but also demonstrated a capacity to translate this to the provision of high-quality person-centred nursing. During her studies, Breeda undertook a placement at Kent State University Affiliated Hospitals in the USA, enhancing her knowledge, skills and expertise, and enabling her to develop innovative practices that, in turn, enhance care. She researched and implemented a system to improve the care of people with hypoglycaemia, promoting a person-centred approach with individualised education and tailored therapy in order to reduce risk. Breeda has also been a devoted and effective representative of her fellow students, serving as a student champion for the Future Nurse Future Midwife initiative led by NIPEC and the Department of Health. In this capacity, she has made a significant contribution to enhancing the preparation of practitioners in line with new Nursing and Midwifery Council standards. Breeda’s nominator writes: “She consistently demonstrates that she is compassionate, caring and an effective professional advocate for those in her care, as evidenced by feedback from mentors in her practice learning portfolio. Breeda has shown leadership and an extra commitment to nursing alongside a full-time and demanding programme of study.” The judging panel commented upon Breeda’s capacity to develop her knowledge and confidence, person-centred approach and excellent communication skills.

Anne O’Neill
The Queen’s University of Belfast

Anne was inspired to undertake pre-registration learning disability nursing education after discovering a passion for caring during a volunteering placement in Vietnam, where she worked with orphaned children with learning disabilities. Leaving a successful sales career, Anne has subsequently developed a keen interest in evidence-based practice, particularly in relation to epilepsy. She has linked closely with specialist epilepsy nurses and completed training in epilepsy awareness and emergency medication. She has also demonstrated her initiative and autonomy by researching and successfully introducing non-pharmaceutical interventions for a patient with insomnia. Anne has recently organised and undertaken a placement in Romania, further developing her communication skills and commitment to evidence-based nursing practice. In this capacity, the university paid tribute to her as “a wonderful ambassador”. Her nominator concludes: “It is clear that Anne has shown real leadership to change the direction of her career and practises in an evidence-based and empathetic manner. I have no doubt that she will be a leader of the future, using all her initiative and leadership to bring about change for people with learning disabilities.” The judging panel commended Anne’s organisational and teamwork skills, her initiative and determination to make a difference for patients.
Esther Beck
Ulster University

Esther’s research examined the understanding and experiences of health professionals and family carers of people with dementia in relation to advance care planning in nursing homes. Advance care planning is a discussion about the future wishes of the patient in respect of all aspects of care. The research involved a survey of home managers, interviews and focus groups with health professionals, as well as interviews with family carers. Esther found that people with dementia are often currently not involved in discussions about advance care planning; their ability to have an autonomous voice in these decisions is limited. Because of the absence of clear clinical guidelines and regional policy in this area, GPs are often leading the process, resulting in a medical model that can lack recognition of the wider psychosocial aspects of the discussion. Families engaging in advance care planning decisions often do so without the knowledge needed to make informed decisions and can lack insight into the reasons for engagement. This is often exacerbated by emotional factors, such as feelings of grief or guilt. Esther concluded that there is an urgent need to increase public awareness of the benefits of advance care planning in cases where the loss of mental capacity is anticipated. She also highlighted the importance of placing the person with dementia at the centre of decision-making. Esther has developed a comprehensive range of associated recommendations for clinical practice, professional education and nursing home management. Her research findings have been widely disseminated through a number of publications and conference presentations. The judging panel commended Esther’s passion and knowledge, along with her unrelenting focus upon engaging with people in order to promote person-centred care.

Katrin Lehmann
Ulster University

A higher than expected number of individuals attending specialist gender services in Northern Ireland have autism or autism traits. The reasons for this are largely unclear but present significant challenges to those providing services. In Northern Ireland, specialist gender services are provided on a regional basis by a part-time commissioned service for young people (KOI) and a service for adults (Brackenburn Clinic), which has never been commissioned. Katrin’s research explored the experiences of this client group in accessing health care services and makes several recommendations for enhancing their experience and the quality of care provided. She found that people with autism or autism traits often present with unusual histories related to their gender and identity development. They can also experience additional challenges navigating their way through health services to access specialist gender care. This is often due to a lack of knowledge and experience on the part of health care professionals, rather than to direct discrimination. Some participants described having to educate health care professionals about the services that they need to access, whilst others reported being asked intrusive and irrelevant questions about their gender identity when accessing health care services for purposes unrelated to this issue. Katrin recommended that all staff working in health care environments should have at least a basic understanding of the needs of people with gender dysphoria and/or autism but must also be aware that they may attend for general health care purposes unrelated to their gender identity. She emphasised that people accessing specialist gender services are not a homogenous group and require individual and person-centred care. Katrin makes a number of associated recommendations related to the physical environment of health service provision and conducting ethical research with people with gender dysphoria and/or autism. The judging panel was impressed with Katrin’s passion and her significant achievements in demystifying this area of practice.
CHIEF NURSING OFFICER’S AWARD

Morag Boyd
Ward sister
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Morag’s nomination focuses upon her success in redesigning gynaecology services at Causeway Hospital in Coleraine to produce better outcomes for women. With waiting times escalating, demand exceeding capacity, a disjointed service and facilities in need of modernisation, Morag acknowledged the need for change in order to support women, improve the environment by providing a bespoke clinical area, enhance patient dignity and confidentiality, and involve staff in service development. By engaging with colleagues, Morag led the operational development of the new Meadows Suite, ensuring that women are now seen at additional nurse-led clinics within an attractive clinical environment. She also established a telephone clinic to enable post-operative reviews to be conducted effectively within six weeks without the need for attendance at a traditional hospital out-patient clinic. The telephone review service has been shaped by the views of users, reflecting the principles of co-design, co-production and person-centred care, whilst regional funding has been secured to support the wider implementation of the nurse-led clinics. Patient satisfaction levels have increased with the move to conduct procedures in the Meadows Suite, rather than in theatre, with audit revealing a 100% positive feedback rate. Morag’s nominator comments: “Her dedication to nursing and her professionalism supported the project to maximise the nurse’s clinical role, transforming how services were delivered to meet the needs of today’s post-operative gynaecology patient, whilst extending the nurse’s skills, knowledge and experience to support nurse-led patient-centred health care. Throughout the implementation, she inspired enthusiasm and a shared vision to manage the change for the team.” The judging panel commended Morag’s determination and tenacity, her ability to inspire a team through collective leadership, and her clear commitment to women’s health.

Judy Brown
Home manager
Arches Care Home

In 2015, Arches Care Home, a home for people with a learning disability, located in east Belfast, was under intense scrutiny, with a low occupancy rate and a number of serious issues identified. It was generally not regarded as a home of choice for prospective clients. Appointed as registered manager the following year, Judith has transformed the home through a combination of digital technology to elicit suggestions and feedback, and empowering staff. Residents, families, staff and visiting health professionals were invited to submit directly to Judith, via a simple i-pad system, their suggestions for improving standards of care. One of the outcomes from this feedback was the establishment of a series of holidays for residents who would otherwise not have the opportunity to travel. Destinations ranged from Strangford to Blackpool to Disneyland Paris. This was an emotional experience, with one resident who visited Blackpool crying with happiness and another inseparable from the toy plane he brought back with him. Perhaps more importantly, however, the holiday trips have heralded a change in culture within the home, embracing living as well as caring. The home now has full occupancy, and satisfaction levels for residents, relatives and staff alike have risen significantly, to 100% in the case of visiting professionals and to 99.8% for residents. The number of accidents recorded within the home has declined by 94%, incidences of pressure ulcers by 100% and infection rates by 45%. There have been impressive recorded reductions in the indicators of abuse, choking, falls and weight loss. As Judith’s nominator explains: “The staff in Arches believe that it is their sense of family, with kindness, friendliness and respect right at its heart, which makes the resident experience so special”. The judging panel was impressed with the ways in which Judith has turned round a home with many problems, listening to residents and staff, empowering learning disability nurses and understanding that, for the resident, the Arches Care Home is their home.
Laura Bradley
Senior health care assistant
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Laura’s nominator describes her as “a role model”, compassionate and respectful towards patients and their families, and a supportive and innovative member of the rehabilitation unit team at the Mid Ulster Hospital in Magherafelt. She provides a high standard of infection control and her nominator praises the way in which Laura managed the introduction of a new tablet-based system for ordering patients’ meals, cascading training to colleagues and ensuring that the patient was at the heart of the process. Laura is highly focused upon her own development, completing a phlebotomy course and regularly sharing her learning and experience with other health care assistants and student nurses. She organised a successful coffee morning on the ward to enhance awareness of dementia within the multidisciplinary team and promote a sense of confidence amongst patients and their families. Laura’s nominator describes how she regularly goes the extra mile to purchase items as diverse as shampoo and lemon drizzle cake on behalf of patients. She notes the significant amount of positive feedback received about Laura, referencing her caring and supportive manner, and her ability always to promote patient dignity. Laura is also praised for her inspirational qualities in respect of student nurses, visitors to the ward, GPs and all other members of the health care team. The judging panel was impressed with Laura’s commitment to her own development and that of her colleagues, her significant contribution to improving the ward environment, and her clear focus on the needs and interests of patients and their families.

Carolyn Aicken
Health care support worker
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Carolyn works on Rathlin Ward at Knockbracken Healthcare Park, which provides acute inpatient care to people with mental ill-health. These patients have a reduced life expectancy, on average some 15-20 years lower than the rest of the population. Carolyn’s nomination focuses upon her role in the development and implementation of a physical health care pathway, which helps to check and monitor the physical health of patients. Carolyn became a ward champion for this initiative, liaising with other members of the multidisciplinary team to articulate and record concerns about patients’ physical health, including particularly in relation to the use of antipsychotic medication. She identified the need for additional training in venepuncture and ECGs, subsequently providing development for other health care support workers and student nurses, as well as to new medical and registered nursing staff. Carolyn also provides care to patients in relation to eating disorders. Her nominator concludes: “Carolyn is extremely passionate about delivering a high standard of physical health care within our acute mental health setting. She is a total inspiration to all staff, the patients for whom she cares and the families she works alongside.” The judging panel commended Carolyn’s role as a patient champion, and her ability to identify and help meet the physical health needs of patients from the point of admission. The panel also recognised Carolyn’s deep commitment to her own development and that of other members of the team.
Suicide can be regarded as one of the most significant public health issues in Northern Ireland, with an annual average of around 269 suicides recorded each year. Michael’s nomination focuses upon his leadership in helping to transition the Lifeline organisation from its former role as a charity service provider to an integral part of the Adult, Social and Primary Care Directorate within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Through a combination of his own transformational leadership style and support from the trust, the Public Health Agency and the HSC Business Services Organisation, Michael established new alliances with mental health services across Northern Ireland and has focused upon making Lifeline more accessible in the deprived urban areas and rural communities where suicide rates are highest. He has sought actively to include marginalised groups, such as the LGBT community, in service design and delivery, extending the principle of co-production to the broader issue of suicide and self-harm prevention. Michael played a key role in the transfer of staff under the new arrangements and has supported their integration within the HSC workforce. He has worked closely with the Public Health Agency to implement high profile public information campaigns and develop related research and data collection. Some 45,000 telephone calls were made to Lifeline during 2018-2019, with almost 100% of calls answered within five seconds by trained counsellors. Michael has targeted Lifeline’s education and support services at high risk areas and communities, enhancing public awareness and providing a strong public health focus to suicide and self-harm prevention in Northern Ireland. The judging panel noted Michael’s exceptional leadership skills in managing the transition of Lifeline, and his clear focus upon staff and the people who access and use the invaluable services provided by Lifeline.

Stephanie Leckey
Community resuscitation lead
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service

The time taken to begin cardio-pulmonary resuscitation [CPR] following a cardiac arrest in the community is critical to the patient’s outcome. During 2017-2018, around 1,500 people experienced an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest in Northern Ireland but only 1 in 10 survived to be discharged home from hospital. Stephanie was appointed in 2018 to lead the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service multiprofessional community resuscitation team and was given the responsibility of implementing the community resuscitation strategy, which aims to improve survival rates from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. It focuses on improving the response of bystanders to cardiac arrest and is dependent upon effective engagement with individuals and communities. Stephanie developed a strong partnership with the Resuscitation Council (UK) to implement the Restart a Heart campaign in Northern Ireland, seeking to challenge popular misconceptions about CPR. As a consequence of her leadership, almost 7,000 people in one week across Northern Ireland received training and awareness under this initiative to provide essential skills and enhance confidence. She has also developed a partnership to promote a communications system that can alert bystanders to an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest within 500 metres. Working with the University of Warwick and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service audit department, Stephanie has ensured that vital data relating to out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in Northern Ireland are included within UK statistics. Further partnership working initiated by Stephanie has enabled school teachers to be trained in lifesaving skills, as well as working with local government to engage members of the community, including promoting Community First Responder schemes. As Stephanie’s nominator explains: “The survivors of an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest are more than a statistic and partnering with them enables more lives to be saved. Survivors are the living proof that early intervention works as, without it, their story would not be told.” The judging panel commended Stephanie’s skilled leadership of a multiprofessional team, together with her capacity to build effective partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders in order, quite simply, to save lives that would otherwise be lost.
LEARNING DISABILITY AWARD

2019 NURSE OF THE YEAR
AWARDS PROGRAMME

Judges: Professor Michael Brown, the Queen’s University of Belfast; Ailish McMeel, RCN Northern Ireland Learning Disability Nurses Network; Eileen Dunlop, RCN Northern Ireland Board

Lorraine Feeney
Ward sister
Western Health and Social Care Trust

Lorraine is part of the service improvement team at Lakeview Hospital, working to enhance in-patient care in response to the changing needs of adults with a learning disability who require hospital admission. This work includes respecting and protecting rights, inclusion and engagement, workforce issues, and the provision of a specialist learning disability service. Lorraine is a member of working groups on the environment and service pathway, approaching these projects with enthusiasm and working her way through challenges to ensure an improved quality of care for those who are undergoing assessment. The outcomes are highly positive. Admission rates and length of stay have both been reduced, as have staff absences and, through a red-flag system, the number of recorded incidents. Staff morale and patient and carer satisfaction levels have similarly improved, whilst there is increased evidence of multidisciplinary working and enhanced service provision feedback. Lorraine, who has recently completed a learning disabilities specialist practice course, is commended by her nominator for working effectively as part of a multidisciplinary team to improve the quality of patient care. The judging panel noted Lorraine’s capacity to listen to and enable staff, her belief in co-production, and her achievements in improving a range of outcomes for patients and staff alike.

Siobhan Brady, health facilitator
Aoife Mills, community learning disability nurse
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Obesity is a serious public health concern, particularly when combined with a sedentary lifestyle, and is a known risk factor for type 2 diabetes. Across the UK, around 40% of adults with a learning disability are obese, due to a combination of high caloric intake, lower levels of physical activity, the use of psychotropic medication and genetic disposition. This can lead, in turn, to depression and enhanced social discrimination. Within the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust area, 66% of adults with a learning disability are recorded as overweight or obese. Siobhan and Aoife set out to improve the health, well-being and lifestyles of people with a learning disability through a 12-week programme involving weekly weight monitoring, interactive information sessions and a dance exercise class, working in partnership with a local sports and recreation group, as well as securing funding through the trust’s Health Development Department. Aiming to recruit 17-20 identified individuals, 32 people actually signed up for the first session. Interventions were developed and refined by Siobhan and Aoife through listening to individual participants and seeking feedback from families and carers. The success of the first programme between September and December 2018 can be measured by the fact that 62% of participants lost weight, as well as through positive feedback from participants, their families and carers, and evidence of improved mental health outcomes. A second programme is now underway and is being piloted by the trust as a safety, quality and improvement initiative. The judging panel recognised clear evidence of person-centred care, the involvement of users in service design and delivery, and improved health outcomes for people with a learning disability.
Claire Kerr, deputy sister
Jennifer Jordan, staff nurse
Western Health and Social Care Trust

Suicide rates in the UK have demonstrated a recent downward trend, except in Northern Ireland, which has the highest rate of any UK country or region. It is the highest single cause of death in people aged under 40 here. Claire and Jennifer practise as mental health nurses in the crisis service at Grangewood Hospital. They have been nominated in respect of their leading roles within a project to address suicide rates through re-designing patient safety planning processes. Claire and Jennifer revised the associated documentation in order to make it more patient-centred. They devised and published an information leaflet for families and carers, and developed a safety plan worksheet to support staff, involving service users in its design and content. As a consequence of this project, the number of patients with personalised safety plans grew from 79% to 95% in just four months. Audit also demonstrated that 90% of service users felt that their plan was helpful, whilst 100% of families and carers were aware of the safety plan, compared with just 20% before the project was initiated. Their nominator notes: “Claire and Jennifer have been integral to the project and its successes, demonstrating the important role of mental health nurses as leaders in supporting people in mental health crisis and improving outcomes in relation to suicide and self-harm in Northern Ireland.”

The judging panel commented: “Claire and Jennifer are outstanding nurses who have made a real difference in safety planning. Their partnership approach is evident; deeply person-centred and family-centred. This is a real example of co-production in a difficult and challenging area of practice.”

Nicola Johnston, deputy sister
Fiona McCary, acting ward sister
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Nicola and Fiona practise at Beechcroft Adolescent Mental Health Unit and their nomination focuses upon a project to reduce the amount of oral psychotropic medication administered to young people by a target of 30%. The need to do so was inspired by concerns that such medication does not always benefit the patient, can produce harmful side-effects and may lead to dependency. Nicola and Fiona initially undertook a staff survey to measure understanding of the issue. This was followed by staff discussion and education sessions, and finally by a focus group with young people themselves to explore their views and concerns. The project was then implemented by the nursing team, under the leadership of Nicola and Fiona, on the basis of the evidence and feedback from all these interactions. Without the deployment of any additional resources, the 30% target was not only met but exceeded, with a phenomenal 63% decrease recorded. This success has been further embedded through the development of regular pharmaceutical meetings, staff education sessions and a young people’s service user group. The nominator praises the contribution made by Nicola and Fiona to inspiring excellence in mental health nursing and improving the care of young people. The judging panel described Nicola and Fiona as “simply outstanding and very compassionate nurses” who have demonstrated “real engagement with young people” and “a high level of reflective practice”.
Rachel Greer
Clinical educator
Southern Health and Social Care Trust

With extensive clinical experience in emergency care, Rachel was appointed to the role of clinical educator in the emergency department at Craigavon Area Hospital in October 2016. Her role involves teaching, facilitating, developing and providing clinical education to the nursing teams within the department in order to promote safe nursing practice and enhance patient care. Her pivotal role in staff development, education and learning embraces induction programmes for new staff, facilitating nursing students in meeting their learning objectives, supporting mentorship and preceptorship programmes, providing triage training and assessing competencies in clinical practice. Rachel has established a trauma intermediate life support course and delivers this, through a range of innovative learning experiences, in partnership with the emergency medicine consultant. Some 60% of all nursing and medical staff within the department have now completed the programme. Her nominator explains how Rachel has helped create and build a culture of learning within the department, encouraging staff to take on mentor and preceptor roles, and undertake further education and development. She also encourages and supports health care assistants who wish to undertake pre-registration nursing education. The environment that Rachel has fostered has enhanced the recruitment and retention of emergency department nursing staff. The judging panel noted Rachel’s capacity to inspire colleagues with her passion, dynamism and expertise, helping to ensure that patients receive safe and effective high quality care delivered by confident and competent nursing staff.

Tracy McGilligan
Practice educator
Western Health and Social Care Trust

Tracy is the practice educator in the emergency department at Altnagelvin Area Hospital. Her nomination focuses upon her work to improve the training and experience of all staff within the department, promoting a culture of lifelong learning and constantly seeking out new educational initiatives. Providing training and education in a busy, overcrowded and often understaffed emergency department can be extremely challenging but Tracy constantly strives to secure opportunities for the team, even to the extent of personally covering clinical roles to enable colleagues to participate in training and development. She has sourced an intermediate life support course to run in-house and has been instrumental in establishing a weekly simulation programme to help improve the confidence and skills of staff. This includes training in setting up equipment and initiatives to help orient new staff. Tracy also established an educational programme which runs as two 10 minute sessions each week. This format enables staff to participate regardless of how busy the department may be. The learning from these sessions is subsequently shared with those who are unable to attend. She has also been instrumental in two significant quality improvement programmes within the department. Tracy provided training aimed at improving triage quality and waiting times, leading to a 30% improvement in the number of patients triaged within 15 minutes. The second such project aims to improve the experience of staff within the department in order to enhance retention and recruitment. This focuses upon perceptions, attitudes and teamwork. She also encourages and supports nursing staff in undertaking their own quality improvement programmes. The judging panel commended Tracy’s innovative approaches to learning and development, her belief in involving staff in the design and delivery of training opportunities, and the significant improvements that she has helped to bring about in the experiences of staff and the quality of care provided to patients.
**Terry McVeigh**  
Macmillan clinical nurse specialist  
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Terry’s nomination focuses upon the outstanding commitment and compassion that he has demonstrated towards people with palliative care needs and their families since taking up his post in 2006. He demonstrates exceptional professional expertise and a capacity to go the extra mile in order to ensure that patients and those close to them receive the best possible care and support. Terry is a strong advocate for patients, often challenging other health professionals in relation to care plans and demonstrating a commitment to person-centred holistic care. One patient with an incurable malignant brain tumour refers to his “pleasant, friendly demeanour” and “reassuring, calm and supportive manner” with her and her family. She then goes on to describe how Terry’s professional expertise and tenacity led to her life being saved on the basis of his diagnosis. Another patient describes Terry as a “a man with a golden heart”, whilst the wife of another patient pays tribute to his understanding and capacity to listen, commenting: “No words can adequately express thanks to you for the attention and care that you provided to my husband, always over and above the call of duty.” Terry’s nominator pays tribute to his “leadership and passion to ensure safe, high quality and effective patient care”. The judging panel noted Terry’s compassion and the empathy he displays with patients and families.

**Donna Pike**  
Staff nurse  
Western Health and Social Care Trust

Donna has been nominated by a patient who developed kidney failure and commenced haemodialysis in 2011 at the age of 28. With two young children, attending four hour dialysis sessions three times each week presented significant logistical challenges, as well as coping with the fatigue that is a consequence of this treatment. Recognising the patient’s concerns and sense of powerlessness, Donna suggested that she should join the ShareHD care programme in order to become more involved in managing her own care. This programme provides an opportunity for patients, in partnership with a nurse, to be trained in carrying out their own dialysis treatment. The patient describes how Donna helped her to learn about the equipment and to become expert in conducting her own treatment, as well as completing the necessary observations and associated paperwork. As the patient explains: “Becoming involved in my care made my time in the renal unit less challenging. Donna helped me to get my confidence back, which enabled me to make better choices regarding my health.” After seven years of dialysis treatment, the patient received a kidney transplant last year and, in her own terms, now has her life back. She describes Donna as “a nurse in a million”. The judging panel praised Donna’s commitment to empowering patients and her capacity to ensure that the needs of patients are understood, communicated and met.
CANCER NURSE
AWARD
Sponsored by Macmillan Cancer Support

Sheena Stothers
Clinical nurse specialist
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

In 2008, Sheena was appointed as the first complex skin cancer clinical nurse specialist in Northern Ireland. She has established, led and is constantly developing the service to ensure its responsiveness to changing patient needs. Referrals to the service have doubled over the last decade to around 230 patients each year. The innovations introduced by Sheena include a nurse-led telephone clinic to inform patients of the results of diagnostic tests and investigations, also requesting radiology investigations to facilitate effective coordination of the patient pathway. Education and encouraging patient self-management are key objectives for Sheena, reflected in the establishment of holistic needs assessment clinics and health and well-being events. She has also, through her own initiative, successfully secured funding through a Florence Nightingale Travel Scholarship in order to research new clinical pathways and services that she is now in the process of helping to establish in Northern Ireland. Sheena’s nominator writes: “She embraces the challenge of a growing and evolving service with strong leadership, tenacity and motivation, by identifying new ways of working through holistic and patient-centred initiatives.” The judging panel was impressed with Sheena’s capacity to equip and empower patients through self-management, her commitment in travelling to identify research practice innovations which could then be introduced in Northern Ireland, and her belief in the need to communicate with and inform patients in a variety of ways, including through social media.

Margaret Carlin
Macmillan lung cancer nurse specialist
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Margaret has been a Macmillan nurse specialist for the past 23 years and has worked as a Macmillan lung cancer nurse in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust since 2011. Her nomination focuses upon her role in establishing specialist palliative care services and working tirelessly to improve standards of care for patients with lung cancer. Passionate about person-centred care, she encourages patients to focus upon the positive aspects of life and not their diagnosis. Constantly striving to improve the patient’s quality of life, Margaret has played a leading and innovative role in promoting self-management and prehabilitation. She embraces the principles of co-production, ensuring that service delivery is regularly reviewed by patient support groups and that feedback is then used to inform refinements and developments to patient care. Margaret is currently working with nursing and medical colleagues to develop a nurse-led oncology review clinic for people with lung cancer. She has also led and driven a local campaign to raise awareness of the early signs and symptoms of lung cancer. Her nominator observes: “Margaret is a positive role model to other lung cancer clinical nurse specialists and demonstrates a passion for ensuring the safe and effective delivery of care. She is committed to ensuring that there is a workforce in both acute and community settings who are skilled in providing care to patients.” The judging panel commended Margaret’s commitment to person-centred care, her determination to speak out and act when she can see how services can be improved, her support for colleagues, and her unrelenting determination to improve standards of patient care.
Sergeant Michael Donaldson
502 (Ulster) Squadron

Sergeant Donaldson is a registered mental health nurse and a qualified flight nurse (mental health) serving in the Medical Flight of 502 (Ulster) Squadron, based at Aldergrove Flying Station. He practises across all three armed services, as well as providing mental health support to veteran service personnel. Michael has served as a community mental health nurse at Thiepval Barracks in Lisburn and HMS Drake naval base in Plymouth. He has also worked as a clinical facilitator in the Personnel Recovery Unit, supporting service personnel in their medical transition either to civilian life or back with their units. Michael practises regularly as an aeromedical evaluation mental health nurse, based at RAF Brize Norton in England, regularly completing two-week placements and deploying around the globe to escort patients back from deployments to UK bases. In this capacity, he helped to develop the role of the reservist flight nurse (mental health). Michael has founded an online forum for reserve mental health nurses to facilitate peer support, and completed a postgraduate qualification in cognitive behavioural therapy, for which he received a commendation. Michael has delivered mental health training within the squadron, mentored junior members of the Medical Flight, and provided strong support to the Flight Commander. Michael's nominator pays tribute to his passion for mental health nursing, his willingness to embrace experiences beyond his comfort zone, and his capacity to demonstrate leadership and a positive spirit in a wide array of often challenging environments. Michael has received a number of military commendations and awards. The judging panel noted his exceptional support for veteran service personnel as well as those currently serving, and his ability to draw upon both his military and clinical expertise in order to deliver a high standard of care and support.
Lesley Mitchell
Macmillan lead nurse and nursing services manager
Western Health and Social Care Trust

Lesley was appointed as the Macmillan lead nurse and nursing services manager at the North West Cancer Centre in January 2018. Her immediate priority was to enable staff to focus on improving the quality of in-patient care and to address the perceived deficiencies that existed by demonstrating effective leadership and promoting person-centred care. Lesley focused upon building a resilient and sustainable nursing service by addressing staffing shortages and developing a comprehensive training and development plan. She also recognised the need to improve in-patient care, using practice development to promote a culture of change and continuous quality improvement. Lesley has increased engagement and collaboration with staff across all departments. Through weekly team leader meetings and monthly medicine governance meetings, she has established a framework of accountability, transparency and learning. The improvements that Lesley has led are evidenced through enhanced performance against key performance indicators, and a reduction in medication and other errors. Lesley has demonstrated strategic leadership though the introduction of succession planning for the role of clinical nurse specialist, her vision, innovation and perseverance successfully promoting and securing a shared vision for the future delivery of specialist cancer nursing. Lesley’s nominator states: “Her ability to support nursing staff and challenge the way things were done has led to colleagues taking ownership of their working environment and reflecting upon the impact and value that they bring to patients and their families”. The judging panel noted Lesley’s exceptional leadership skills and capacity to achieve significant improvements in patient care by supporting, developing and inspiring her colleagues.

Aaron Ramsey
Ward manager
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Aaron’s nomination focuses upon his leadership of the psychiatric intensive care unit at Holywell Hospital in Antrim, particularly in achieving a reduction in the time spent by patients in seclusion. Aaron’s collaborative leadership style inspires the team and helps to reinforce a culture of accountability and transparency. A key challenge in this area of practice is embracing openness and involving carers and families without breaching patient confidentiality or increasing risk. Aaron has successfully met this challenge through his innovative leadership style. He has promoted a culture of continuous quality improvement and reflective practice, also securing additional funding to enhance the ward environment. As a consequence of Aaron’s leadership, the number of seclusion incidents in the unit has continued a strong downward trend, falling from 47 involving 31 individuals in 2015-2016 to 21 involving 15 individuals in 2017-2018. He is currently leading the development of a sensory room within the unit to provide a further alternative to seclusion. His nominator concludes: “Aaron has shown himself to be a strong advocate for nurses. He enables professionalism through shared governance and decision-making, encouraging his team that, through organisational risk assessment, they can apply professional judgement as a basis for action.” The judging panel commented: “Aaron has shown true leadership in a very difficult environment. He wants every member of the team to realise the best possible vision of themselves. He understands the needs of patients and their families, remembering as a nurse that, in his own words: “Without patients, we are nothing”.”
Colette Johnston
Specialist community public health nurse (school nurse)
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Colette is leading the Transforming School Nursing project in the Northern Trust, a collaborative approach between public health nursing, parents, pupils and a local strategic partnership. The aim is to integrate traditional school nursing with specialist community public health nursing in order to promote innovation and diversity, working to meet the physical, emotional and mental health needs of pupils through prevention, early identification and early intervention. Colette is leading on changing practice and has been instrumental in applying the principles of co-production to this work, engaging with school staff, parents and pupils. A “design a school nurse” initiative, facilitated by the Public Health Agency, provided important feedback from pupils that has been used to develop a friendly, supportive and accessible service. Colette has engaged with local child and adolescent mental health services, social work teams and LGBT services to provide a framework for identifying and assessing emotional and mental health. Furthermore, health appraisals have been delivered in seven schools and Colette is also available to address the presenting health needs of children on a daily basis. Within a four month period, Colette secured a 5% increase in school leaver immunisation uptake at one school, and engaged pupils in activities aimed at tackling obesity, specifically by promoting physical exercise and providing dietary advice. A survey found that 98% of pupils were able to name their school nurse and many were also able to provide a detailed account of the support and advice available from the school nurse. The judging panel was impressed with the ways in which Colette has overcome the traditional difficulties in working across both health and education sectors and, through direct engagement with pupils, developing a service that not only meets their needs but has been shaped by them.

Emma McKinney
Specialist nurse practitioner
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Young people in Northern Ireland within the criminal justice system can often experience difficulties accessing community mental health services, despite the fact that many experience drug and alcohol misuse, homelessness, inter-generational trauma, and physical or sexual abuse. This can be due to a number of factors, some of which can involve inflexible appointment arrangements, a lack of continuity of care, or services lacking the skills to engage with this group of young people with complex needs. Emma practises within the Step 3, In-Reach Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service [CAMHS] at Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre in Bangor. Her nomination focuses upon her proactive role in implementing a protocol for supporting the transfer of care between Woodlands and community CAMHS teams in the five HSC trusts. This aims to make the transfer and sharing of information as seamless as possible to ensure that the needs of the young people are understood and met. The protocol also seeks to clarify roles, promote good practice, and develop an inclusive approach to care for young people, their families and carers. The implementation of this protocol has resolved various issues including inadequate discharge planning and inconsistencies in service provision. Most importantly, 100% of young people who accessed the In-Reach CAMHS service prior to leaving Woodlands are now able to receive care and support from their local trust CAMHS team. Emma’s nominator says: “Through her unwavering, effortless, style and enthusiastic practice, she not only seeks to improve the continued mental health provision for these young people but she has also built close working relationships, peer support and mutual respect for those involved in this process”. The mother of one young person told Emma: “You’re the first person that listened to my son”. The judging panel recognised Emma’s visionary leadership and determination to secure equality of access to services across Northern Ireland for all the young people who rely upon them for care and support.
Mary O’Kane
Macmillan end of life care facilitator
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Mary’s nomination focuses on her exceptional achievements in enhancing end of life care in acute hospital settings for those identified as being within the last year of life. The model that she has developed enables the patient’s particular needs and wishes to be met, helps to prevent crisis admissions, implements UK guidance, enables the voice of the patient to shape service design, and informs staff training. It has promoted better symptom management and generally improved the experience for those in the last days of life. Mary negotiated with the Director of Nursing and other members of the senior management in order to ensure that improving end of life care was identified as a trust priority, as reflected in the new model of care. This has, in turn, promoted better communication with patients and their families, shared decision-making and more consistent hydration, for example. Prescribing now focuses on the anticipatory, rather than the reactive. Mary has also demonstrated the economic benefits of the model in terms of the number of bed days saved and the reduced level of emergency department attendances. Evaluation has also produced positive feedback from families, nurses and other members of the multidisciplinary team. Mary’s nominator refers to her “exceptional skills” and describes how “her motivation, influence and negotiation has ensured a positive impact for patients, families and staff”. The judging panel noted Mary’s passion, leadership and person-centred approach, as well as her belief that life is to be lived until the moment of death and that there is only one opportunity to get this right.

Donna Pike, staff nurse
Amanda Buchanan, staff nurse
Western Health and Social Care Trust

Haemodialysis is the most common form of therapy for renal failure. Treatment usually involves attending hospital three times each week for a four hour session undertaken by a nurse. Donna and Amanda have been nominated for their work in introducing the ShareHD programme to Altnagelvin Hospital. This enables patients to choose to take control of aspects of their own dialysis care, with appropriate education and support. Having first become aware of ShareHD at a European conference, Donna and Amanda undertook training under their own initiative to equip them with the skills to deliver the programme locally, the first to do so in Northern Ireland. Some 60 patients at Altnagelvin Hospital have been offered the programme, enabling them to become more closely involved in managing their own care and to an extent with which they feel comfortable. Donna and Amanda designed a work book to explain the programme and they undertake regular patient and staff assessments and data collection. Patient feedback has been exemplary, with comments such as: “I feel more in control”, “I feel included” and “I feel part of the team”. Donna and Amanda have presented their experiences with the ShareHD programme locally, nationally and at patient support meetings. The judging panel commended Donna and Amanda for their person-centred approach, capacity to overcome resistance to change, and determination to enable those patients who wish to do so to become equal partners in their own care.
OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Sponsored by NIPEC

The Outstanding Achievement Award 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:

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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 MBE
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