



Student nurses with Dr Alison Stevens, Associate Professor in Nursing, Midwifery & Health at Northumbria University & Debbie Reape, Interim Executive Director of Nursing at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

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North East continues to pioneer nurse education

A new UK nursing course, launched last year, has recruited its second group of student nurses.

The 18-month full-time work-based nursing degree was the first course of its kind when it was launched by Northumbria University, Newcastle and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust in March 2016.

Traditionally a three-year qualification, the 18-month nursing course is aimed at people with a healthcare background and leads to a BSc (Hons) Nursing Studies/Registered Nurse (Adult) degree which is recognised by professional regulatory body, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).

The latest course sees a further ten new student nurses carry out a mix of classroom-based teaching simulated clinical skills and hands-on practical experience in hospitals and the community across Northumberland and North Tyneside.

Professor Pam Dawson, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor for Strategic Workforce Planning and Development at Northumbria University, said: “Due to success of the first course we are delighted to extend the programme to a further group of nursing students.

“The course with Northumbria Healthcare is a real trail blazer with other NHS trusts and higher education institutions now following in our footsteps.

“Northumbria University has a long-standing excellent reputation for delivering high quality innovative nurse education and training. This programme uses a new approach of workplace-based coaching to support student nurses’ teaching and learning, keeping quality of patient care at the forefront.”

Northumbria Healthcare, which runs hospitals and community services in Northumberland and North Tyneside, has provided funding for the students to undertake the degree and they are guaranteed an interview with the trust once they graduate.

As of 2017, student nurses no longer receive a bursary from the Government but are expected to fund it themselves, as is the case for all other courses.

Applicants for the course went through a rigorous application and assessment process with strict criteria to determine their previous experience and suitability, before starting the programme. This included assessments by both the trust and the university, and a full-day workshop where applicants’ responses to simulated scenarios were observed.

Debbie Reape, Interim Executive Director of Nursing at Northumbria

Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, said: “Our 18-month nurse training programme caused quite a stir in the nursing world when it was launched in March last year and we are delighted with how our recruits are progressing, thanks to their hard work and determination and our excellent partnership with Northumbria University, Newcastle.

“Like every trust in the country we continue to face recruitment challenges and we are passionate about building on our strong foundations of nurse training and playing our part in developing the workforce of the future. This latest intake of student nurses shows our continued support to nurse education and it is flattering to know that so many are now following our lead.”

Nine of the student nurses already worked in healthcare-related roles for Northumbria Healthcare.

Sophie Haywood, from Morpeth, previously studied Criminology at Northumbria University before travelling and working in car sales. She said: “When I left university I wanted to be a nurse, after I travelled, I joined Northumbria as a healthcare assistant on a cardiology unit and learned so much whilst I was there. I was incredibly anxious waiting to find out if my application had been successful as this opportunity is not available anywhere else in the country and I couldn’t have afforded the tuition fees. It is not an easy option but I feel so lucky and I’m loving every minute so far.”

Jacqui Barker, from Monkseaton, has two sons and worked for the trust for 15 years in various roles, including occupational therapy. She said: “This is just an amazing opportunity. I always wanted to be a nurse but I also loved my job. For me it was about timing with juggling a family and finances. I am much more settled now.

“I didn’t think I would be successful but I love studying and you’re never too old. I feel incredibly grateful to be here and can’t wait to start my placements.”

Liam Darling-Cooper has a young son and lives in North Shields. He was worked in the NHS for 13 years in a range of roles, including as a health and fitness facilitator and in smoking and weight management.

He said: "I am thoroughly enjoying the course; all the studying can be a bit of a struggle as there is a lot to get through in 18 months but I love it. Having clinical experience and practical experience of working in the NHS has been a huge asset and meant we can hit the ground running. My wife is a nurse at Northumbria and thinks it's fantastic. This is such a great opportunity as many people can't afford to go back to study full time, it's such a privilege."

Sarah Lindman, from North Shields, worked in health and social care in nursing and residential homes after leaving school. She joined Northumbria in 2002 as a healthcare assistant and worked in intensive care helping to set up a new rehabilitation service for patients. She said: "I've wanted to be a nurse since I was a child but didn't have the confidence until working on the new intensive care rehabilitation project."

"My mum had always wanted to be a midwife but didn't get to pursue it so my parents are proud as punch. Now I'm doing this I don't know why I didn't do it sooner. I absolutely love it. I can't thank the trust enough for this opportunity. They've played a huge part in my development and the support from the university is second to none."

Dorothy Oparaechie is one of two student nurses on the course who are originally from Nigeria and living in Newcastle. Dorothy has two young children. She worked as a nurse in Nigeria and has a masters in public health. For the last three years, she has worked at Hexham General Hospital as a nursing assistant on a medical ward. She said: "I love caring and nursing, and getting to know patients. It's not easy studying with two young children but my husband is amazing and ensures I have the time to study. I couldn't do it without his support. The university staff are great too; nothing is too much trouble."

Hanna Whincup, originally from Poland, lives in Northumberland and has three grown-up children. She has lived in England since 1989. Her daughter is also studying for a degree at Northumbria University in Nutrition. She said: "At the age of 40 I was made redundant. I always knew I wanted to work in care or nursing and so I joined Northumbria in 2009 as a healthcare assistant before becoming a health trainer. After completing a foundation degree two years ago I saw this as a great chance to follow my dream – a career in nursing, which is so close to my heart and I didn't want to regret not going for it."

Emma Hay, from South Shields, was working as a healthcare assistant at the RVI in Newcastle before applying for the course. She said: “The fact the course was 18 months really appealed to me as I was keen to qualify as soon as possible.

“I was really excited to start the course and my family and friends are incredibly proud of me. Having been a healthcare assistant has helped significantly with the training and the support you get from the university and the trust is fantastic. I just can’t wait to start my placements.”

At the end of the course, the students will be ideally placed to work in hospitals or in the community – a key part of work led by Northumbria Healthcare to develop new models of care in Northumberland as a national vanguard site as chosen by NHS England.

The 10 student nurses on the first course are due to graduate this autumn. The course has also been viewed positively by the NMC following a monitoring visit where it was highly commended in the verbal feedback.

For more information visit www.northumbria.nhs.uk/nursecourse

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk