



Dr Kay Heslop

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Assistant Professor appointed to senior lifeboat operations role at RNLI

An Assistant Professor at Northumbria University has been appointed to a senior role at [Cullercoats Royal National Lifeboat Institution \(RNLI\)](#) lifeboat station where she will use her skills and expertise to educate volunteers and the community about the importance of water safety.

[Dr Kay Heslop](#) is Head of Education in the University's Department of [Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing](#), specialising in continuous professional education and leading on part-time programmes for work-based

learners.

She has been named the station's Lifeboat Operations Manager after volunteering at the charity for the last four years.

Dr Heslop will now be fully responsible for all procedures at the busy North Tyneside rescue base, including authorising the launch of lifeboats when needed, managing volunteer crew members, and maintaining equipment to ensure it is in a constant state of readiness for a potential rescue at sea.

Using her teaching and research expertise, Dr Heslop will blend leadership, teamwork and educational skills to teach members of the community about open water safety.

During the station's most recent community and school visits, over only a fortnight almost 300 adults and children were taught about the subject and how they can help others, and so far this year, the crew has been called out 26 times to help people in difficulty.

The position will also bring wider benefits for the University, with plans in place for Dr Heslop to work with colleagues in the Department of [Geography and Environmental Sciences](#) to offer real-life projects for undergraduate students, focusing on outreach and knowledge exchange at the RNLI. She has also spoken of open water safety in a recent professional development article she wrote for the early years network in Northumberland.

Speaking about her appointment, which is a voluntary position, Dr Heslop said: "I view this as a privilege. Not only does this mean being involved in sustaining search and rescue facilities in the local area, but it offers an opportunity to work across our community and develop new skills for myself and for others.

"As my research is based on intergenerational activity and I'm employed in education, this matches my skillset perfectly.

"We have an amazing community in Cullercoats and local people are very proud of our search and rescue facilities. It's wonderful to be part of it."

She added: "Cross-faculty working is important in helping students to gain

greater learning opportunities and experiences during their time at Northumbria. I'm passionate about providing genuinely inclusive, authentic and motivational educational activities in real-time, so it will be my absolute pleasure to help our Environmental Science students gain just that at RNLI Cullercoats."

Anna and Kay Heslop at Cullercoats RNLI station

Supporting the work of the RNLI runs in Dr Heslop's family. Her daughter Anna, who graduated from Northumbria with a degree in Education Practice in 2017, is a Helm at Cullercoats RNLI Lifeboat Station, meaning she can take command of the rescue vessel during calls. She is the first woman to hold the title in its 170-year history, and also works as a trainer and assessor at the charity.

RNLI Area Lifesaving Manager Neil Hancock said: "We are delighted that Dr Heslop has taken on the role of volunteer Lifeboat Operations Manager at Cullercoats RNLI. Already an integral member of the lifeboat station, she will bring a wealth of experience to her new role with our charity. The station is looking forward to the next chapter of lifesaving with Dr Heslop at the helm."

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