



L-R Kate Hackett and Allison Farnworth. Credit Barry Pells and Northumbria University

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Double research award win for Northumbria health academics

Two academics from Northumbria University have been awarded the prestigious [Senior Clinical and Practitioner Research Award](#) (SCPRA) by the [National Institute for Health and Care Research](#) (NIHR).

[Dr Kate Hackett](#), Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy, and [Dr Allison Farnworth](#), Associate Professor of Maternal and Family Health, have been selected for this competitive national award, which provides up to five years of funding to support exceptional researchers in developing their clinical and

practitioner academic careers.

This is the second year the SCPRA's have been awarded, with Dr Hackett and Dr Farnworth the first academics from Northumbria to be selected, underscoring the university's growing reputation for excellence in health and care research and demonstrating the calibre of clinical and practitioner academics working at the institution.

[Dr Kate Hackett](#), who also holds an honorary Consultant Occupational Therapist position at Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, has been awarded a four-year SCPRA. The award will enable her to spend dedicated time on research into how nature-based approaches can support self-management of health conditions, reduce the impact of fatigue, and improve quality of life for people living with long-term illness.

Kate's research will include qualitative and exploratory work with people participating in existing nature-based programmes, using creative participatory methods such as the use of photography to better understand engagement with natural environments. She will also spend time with Social Prescribing Link Workers in primary care settings and explore green social prescribing referral processes.

The award will enable Kate to undertake national and international visits to connect with researchers and innovative projects in the UK and Sweden – countries leading the way in nature-based interventions. The award also provides her with access to mentors and expertise in both the UK and the Netherlands, including at the European Centre for Environment and Human Health and Vrije University, Amsterdam. This work will build towards future funding applications for co-developed, evidence-informed interventions aimed at people with long-term conditions and fatigue.

[Dr Allison Farnworth](#), who joined Northumbria University in November 2023, brings over 25 years of healthcare research experience to her five-year SCPRA award, which will focus on transforming reproductive healthcare by maximising the input of service users.

As a practising midwife, who also maintains a clinical research delivery role at Newcastle University and Hospitals, Allison's research focuses on how health care providers can better access and use information from service users to improve reproductive healthcare for women and families.

Her work addresses a critical gap in healthcare – while vast amounts of data are collected about service user experiences and care quality, clinicians and service users often lack the skills and support to use this data effectively to improve care outcomes. Allison's research particularly focuses on women with complex care needs and health issues during pregnancy.

Working with six mentors, including nationally recognised figures in maternity focused research, Allison will develop frameworks and tools to support clinicians and service users in making sense of data collected through services like Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnerships. The award includes opportunities for international collaboration, with a planned placement in Melbourne, Australia, to learn from advances in indigenous population health disparities work.

Both Kate and Allison's research programmes align with NIHR's commitment to addressing health disparities and improving outcomes for vulnerable populations. Kate's work will explore accessibility challenges in nature-based interventions, while Allison's research addresses concerning health disparities in maternity care and will directly feed into national work supported by the NIHR Challenge Maternity Disparities Consortium.

The SCPRA awards provide extensive mentorship and training opportunities, including access to senior researchers across disciplines, tailored development plans, and eligibility for NIHR leadership programmes such as the Future Focused Leadership Programme and the NIHR Mid-Career Mentoring Programme. Both academics will also receive funding to attend and present at national and international conferences.

Both Kate and Allison are committed to inspiring and supporting other clinical academics. Kate encourages other Allied Health Professionals, nurses, or midwives with doctorates to consider applying for the next round of SCPRA awards, expected to open in Autumn 2025, and Allison emphasises the importance of ensuring clinicians with PhDs don't lose opportunities to translate their research into practice.

[Professor Alison Machin](#), Head of Northumbria's School of Healthcare and Nursing Sciences, said: "We are tremendously proud of Kate and Allison for receiving these prestigious awards. Their achievement reflects the high quality of research being conducted at Northumbria University and demonstrates our commitment to advancing health and care research that

makes a real difference to people's lives. Both projects address critical challenges in healthcare and have the potential to transform care delivery for some of our most vulnerable populations."

The SCPRA is a relatively new award scheme, now in its second round, designed to support senior clinicians and practitioners who have obtained a PhD. The award provides protected time from current roles to engage in research activities and is part of NIHR's push to support nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals in developing research careers – recognising that while these professionals are on the front line of healthcare, they have not historically had the same research support as medical professionals.

Northumbria University is a research-intensive institution committed to delivering world-class education and conducting research that addresses real-world challenges. The university's health and care research portfolio spans multiple disciplines and focuses on improving outcomes for individuals and communities across the North East and beyond.

Ends

Notes to editors

About the NIHR

The mission of the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) is to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research. This is done by:

- Funding high quality, timely research that benefits the NHS, public health and social care;
- Investing in world-class expertise, facilities and a skilled delivery workforce to translate discoveries into improved treatments and services;
- Partnering with patients, service users, carers and communities, improving the relevance, quality and impact of our research;
- Attracting, training and supporting the best researchers to tackle complex health and social care challenges;
- Collaborating with other public funders, charities and industry to

- help shape a cohesive and globally competitive research system; Funding applied global health research and training to meet the needs of the poorest people in low and middle income countries.

NIHR is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care. Its work in low and middle income countries is principally funded through UK international development funding from the UK government.

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk

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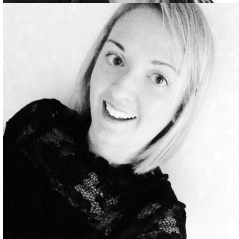


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