



L-R: Jemma James, Sue Tiplady, Professor Glenda Cook and Dr Juliana Thompson

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Nursing Student Internship Programme Wins Award

A Northumbria University programme designed to increase the number of nursing students who would consider working in a care home, has won a national award.

The Integrated Health and Social Care Internship programme, which has been designed for caring for older people with complex needs, is believed to be the first of its kind in the country.

Northumbria nursing degree students spend half of their time in university, and the other half on placement in hospitals and community settings across the region, where they put their new-found skills into practice

The new programme sees final year adult nursing students spending their management placement working across health and social care sectors, including care homes, NHS and voluntary sector.

Jemma James, 39, of Durham graduated from Northumbria University with a degree in Adult Nursing in March 2019 and was initially nominated for the RCNI Student Nurse Award for work she did as part of the new internship programme developed by the University.

She was one of five finalists shortlisted for her work nursing a patient who required significant support for his mental, physical and social health. Whilst on the internship she managed to support him to return to independent living where he had been for a year.

Jemma in turn nominated the team of staff who set up and supported the internship programme and they won a Cavell Nursing Star Award at the Care Home Matters Conference.

Jemma, who now works as a Staff Nurse in an Acute Elderly Care Ward at the Freeman Hospital, said: “The programme was designed to get student nurses interested in and recognising care home nursing as integral to integrated care for older people, and it is targeted at those who wish to specialise in the care of older people.

“Nursing older people, in particular in a care home, can be seen as the ‘Cinderella service’. People don’t think it is skilled, but actually it’s the opposite case. I have loved it and hope to return to it along with working on a ward, it is challenging, fantastic and offers brilliant opportunities.”

The Cavell Nursing Star Award went to Northumbria Senior Lecturers Dr Juliana Thompson and Sue Tiplady who set up the programme, care home nurse Julia Stephens who mentored Jemma in the care home setting, and Professor Glenda Cook, Professor of Nursing.

The Northumbria team developed, implemented and evaluated the

programme which was developed from an American model. Other organisations in the UK are interested in adopting the programme and Sydney University is exploring using the model to engage their students working in the field of older people's nursing.

Dr Thompson said: "The model has been successful due to the commitment and collaboration of a number of health and social care organisations including care homes, clinical commissioning groups, the wider NHS and the voluntary sector. This has led to a 'joined up' education experience for the interns – they get to understand the whole health and social care journey for older people, which helps them to deliver person-centred, individualised care."

The intern role involves working in care homes with specialist healthcare professionals such as dementia and Admiral nurses, and with policy makers to experience the wider health and social care system and how it impacts on the care of older people.

"How a care home works is very different to working in a hospital," explains Jemma. "You need to learn about multi-morbidities, frailty, end of life care, understanding budgeting and funding, and care transfers. How you communicate with your colleagues, patients and their families is key."

"I loved doing the internship. Working in a hospital you have the doctors, physios, everyone is on call. In a care home you are an autonomous nurse practitioner."

"The difference a care home nurse can make to someone is vast, having a good quality of life, being happy, healthy, engaged, active and stimulated. You really become the heart of the family."

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