



L-r Joe Phillips, Tom Nicholson, Amanda Clarke, Gillian Fraser, Dr Phil Adams, Rebecca Craig Lindsey Marshall, Nicola Miller

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## Recognising the best new nursing talent

Six nursing and midwifery students from Northumbria University, Newcastle have received prestigious awards for their efforts whilst undertaking their degree programmes.

Students undertaking nursing and midwifery degrees at Northumbria University spend half of their time at the University, and the other half of their time on placement in hospitals and community settings across the region, where they are able to put their new-found skills into practice.

The Heath Award, which was established in 1892 by George Yeoman Heath, former President of the Royal College of Medicine, is presented each year to the best nurses and midwives graduating from Northumbria University's nursing and midwifery programmes. The winners were chosen after being nominated by academics and hospital staff with whom they worked whilst on placement.

The 2017 Heath Awards winners are midwife Rebecca Craig from Morpeth; mental health nurses Nicola Miller and Tom Nicholson from South Shields and Ellington, Northumberland, respectively; children's nurse Lindsey Marshall from Sunderland and adult nurses Gillian Fraser and Joe Phillips from Ellington, Northumberland and Norwich respectively.

Nicola, who had a baby during her degree and continued with her studies, began her career studying healthcare at South Tyneside College, following in the shoes of her sister - a learning disability nurse - before starting her degree at Northumbria. Now working for Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust at Hopewood Park, Ryhope in Sunderland, Nicola works with inpatient adult mental health patients. Talking about her award, Nicola said: "I feel incredibly honoured, but also feel like I haven't done anything special. I never thought in a million years that I would qualify for the award, let alone be nominated."

Tom was diagnosed with ADHD at the age of five. He also works for Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust caring for young people in the community in Newcastle and Gateshead. He said: "Following my early difficulties I have always wanted to give something back and be a role model and inspire others. I originally wanted to go into the military but after a year working as a support worker I decided I wanted to support children and young people and started a mental health nursing degree course within the year.

"I absolutely love mental health nursing. It is such a rewarding and enjoyable career. I am absolutely ecstatic about the award. It's so nice to be recognised for all the hard work; however it also makes me feel quite humble as there are lots of others on the course who also deserve it. The tutors and students are so supportive."

Tom now speaks about ADHD across the UK and has helped set up parent education groups where parents of children diagnosed with ADHD are offered

support, education and advice. Tom also had another cause to celebrate having met his partner on the course too.

Rebecca, started her degree later in life after having a family. She said: “Being a midwife is something I’ve always wanted to do, but life kind of got in the way of it. As soon as I had the opportunity I jumped at the chance and I threw my all into it. It was hard work but very rewarding. I was determined to work as hard as I could and am absolutely delighted at the result and to receive this award.”

Now working for Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust at the Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital in Cramlington, Rebecca said: “The thing I really love about being a midwife is looking after women and being an advocate for them, it’s not just about the babies. We are supporting new parents and new families.”

During her time at University Rebecca helped set up the university’s midwifery society.

Joe started his nursing degree after a year working in domiciliary care in the community after his A levels. Now working as a staff nurse in accident and emergency at Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Joe said: “I have always wanted to work in healthcare and to care for vulnerable people. I love talking to people, working in a pressurised environment and being able to make a difference, so nursing was perfect for me.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Northumbria and I was keen to study at the University due to its excellent reputation for nursing, coupled with Newcastle being a great city. The clinical support and tutors have been excellent.

Speaking about his award Joe said: “I feel very honoured – it’s great to be recognised for your hard work and my family are incredibly proud. I would like to thank the people who have nominated me.”

Lindsey is a staff nurse in children’s services and works in the community for Gateshead Health NHS Trust. She said: “I’ve always wanted to be a nurse and started my degree after completing my A levels. It has been really

challenging but I've loved every minute of it. Being a nurse is the most rewarding job in the world - I couldn't imagine doing anything else. When they contacted me about the award it was a complete surprise and certainly not something I was expecting. My family and friends think it's fantastic."

Gillian is a staff nurse in Accident and Emergency at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust at the Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital in Cramlington and has three young children. She also always wanted to be a nurse, leaving school at 15 to do a nursing course at college. However, she decided to get a job and worked as a senior analyst at Alcan for 14 years until the plant closed and she was made redundant. Her husband suggested she pursued her dream and after a year's college course, she started her nursing degree.

Gillian said: "Logistically it was a challenge with a young family but they've been so supportive. The lecturers have been amazing – their experience and knowledge has been invaluable and they've been so supportive. My husband and his father graduated from Northumbria so I knew it has an excellent reputation."

She was very surprised to receive the award. She said: "I really can't believe it, it doesn't seem real. I feel incredibly privileged to have received it and means a great deal as I'm being recognised for something I've always aspired to. It means so much. Everyone is so proud of me and had more belief in me than I did."

Dr Phil Adams, Chair of the Health Trust, said: "It is such a great honour to be involved in these awards. They were bequeathed to celebrate excellence in the practice and theory of general nursing and midwifery. These students have been selected as winners not only for their excellent academic and clinical performance, but also for the behaviours and qualities they have displayed whilst training. Nursing and midwifery are such critical roles and excellent nursing makes all the difference to the care patients receive and these winners are very worthy recipients indeed."

Professor Amanda Clarke, Head of Nursing, Midwifery and Health at Northumbria University, said: "The standard of nominations for the awards has, yet again, been incredibly high. At Northumbria we are incredibly privileged to have such diligent, compassionate and high achieving students who develop into high quality, skilled professionals. It is a real honour to

teach and work with them, and I am absolutely delighted that their efforts have been recognised.”

The students were presented with their awards – a medal and certificate - at a special ceremony by Dr Kath Mannix, a former Consultant in Palliative Care, at Newcastle’s Royal Victoria Infirmary.

For more information on nursing, midwifery and health courses at Northumbria University, visit [www.northumbria.ac.uk/nursing](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/nursing)

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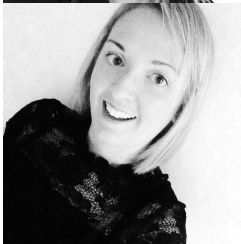


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