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## **Unique trust and university partnership prepares nursing graduates the Northumbria way**

**Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Northumbria University have joined forces in a unique partnership to develop an innovative new way of training people with healthcare experience to become nurses.**

In what is believed to be the first of its kind in the country, the trust and university are working together to deliver a new work-based programme leading to an honours degree in nursing for people who already have substantial experience and previous academic study in the nursing and

healthcare sector.

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Given the recruitment challenges facing the whole of the NHS, Northumbria Healthcare has invested £1million to put together a bespoke undergraduate nursing programme lasting 18 months to train nurses of the future which meets the requirements of the professional regulatory body the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

Twenty nurses will start the course this year and once trained and qualified to work in the NHS, will help to ease pressures on the future workforce

With a mix of classroom-based teaching simulated clinical skills and hands-on practical experience in hospitals and the community, the recruits will be ideally placed to provide high quality care to patients across Northumberland and North Tyneside and, on completion, will have guaranteed employment at Northumbria Healthcare.

The first 10 recruits – made up of trust staff – have started the programme. The opportunity was so popular with the trust's existing employees that it received almost six times the number of applications than there were places.

Applicants were put through a rigorous application and assessment process with strict criteria to determine their previous experience and suitability, before being shortlisted for the programme. This included assessments by both the trust and the university, and a full-day workshop in which their

actions and reactions were monitored while they were faced with different scenarios that they may experience.

Given the uniqueness of the project, the programme has attracted much attention from other trusts and training providers and is yet another example of Northumbria Healthcare – widely recognised as being one of the most forward-thinking NHS organisations in the country – pioneering new approaches.

Debbie Reape, interim executive director of nursing at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, said: “As one of the largest trusts nationally, we have almost 3,000 registered nurses and midwives who deliver high quality care for our patients in hospitals and in the community across Northumberland and North Tyneside.

“Like every NHS organisation in the country, we continue to face real recruitment pressures and must continually look at innovative ways to secure our future nursing workforce.

“We have an unparalleled track record of devising our own tailor-made solutions which fit our needs and bring benefits for our patients. Whether that be transforming emergency and urgent care in Northumberland and North Tyneside by opening the country’s first purpose-built hospital dedicated to emergency care or setting up one of the most comprehensive patient experience programmes to gather feedback, this is an excellent example of coming up with ideas which truly work for us.

“We also have vast experience of working in partnership with other organisations and we’re delighted to be running this unique programme with Northumbria University and leading the way nationally on an innovative new way of nurse training.

“By working in partnership with Northumbria University to train our own nurses we will not only be growing our own workforce and creating opportunities for our own staff, we will be able to have nurses who share our values and put patients at the heart of everything they do.

“This course is building on the excellent foundation of nurse training we already have in place at the trust through strong nurse mentorship, excellent

multi-disciplinary resources and broad learning opportunities and the new students will join our existing pre-registration nurses we already have in the trust.”

Professor Pam Dawson, Associate Dean for Strategic Workforce Planning and Development in Northumbria University’s Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, said: “We are delighted to be working in partnership with Northumbria Healthcare on this innovative new programme. This is a new way of educating and training future nurses using a workplace-based coaching model to support their teaching and learning, keeping quality of patient care at the forefront.

“The trust is a front-runner in looking at new ways of working to develop the workforce they need for the future and this innovative programme has been designed to fully meet its needs. It will enable motivated people with healthcare experience already working within the sector to step up and become fully qualified nurses and we hope that this will be the first of many such arrangements with other trusts across the country.”

Given that the training will cover hospital and community nursing, the recruits will be able to work in both areas – 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.

Debbie Reape added: “As we work towards integrating care yet further, it is vitally important that our nurses are able to work in both areas in order to ensure patients have a seamless transition from hospital to community care.

“This programme is a big part of our work towards our vision of having one single workforce to cater for patients’ needs, regardless of whether they’re receiving their care at home, in the community or in hospital.”

Jenni Thompson and Ogechi Okore are two of the students who joined Northumbria’s [BSc programme in Adult Nursing Studies](#) last month and they are already enjoying the programme.

Jenni, 33, from Morpeth, who previously worked as a nursing assistant in the maternity unit at Hexham General Hospital, explained why she decided to study the course: “I was working in pharmaceuticals before having my

children and wanted to work part-time so changed career.

“I trained as a breastfeeding volunteer after having my first child and then became a breastfeeding support worker in Northumberland. This grew my interest in healthcare and I planned to do a nursing degree in around five years, but this opportunity came up and it was too good to miss.

“I love it so far. It’s so interesting and the teaching team have been fantastic. I couldn’t ask for better support.”

Mum-of-three, Ogechi, 32, from Newcastle, added: “I’ve always had an interest in caring for ill people and have been supporting patients as a nursing assistant at North Tyneside General Hospital until this opportunity came up.

“The course has been so interesting. I already have experience of a lot of the practical elements but didn’t know the theory behind it, so doing the research and reading the journals has been so empowering.

“When it finishes I’d particularly like to specialise in alcohol nursing, given the amount of NHS spending in this area, and help people to get the right information they need to make a real difference in their lives.”

The trust hopes to enrol a second cohort of 10 students onto the programme in September and continue with the initiative.

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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