

## Making an impact in Northern Ireland

We celebrate the Advancing Healthcare Awards Northern Ireland with a black-tie dinner and ceremony at the Stormont Hotel in Belfast. We received 111 entries, more than ever before, more awards than ever before, more sponsors and supporters and nearly 300 guests to celebrate the achievements of AHPs and healthcare scientists.

Our host is the remarkable Ann Keen, a nurse who has been at the centre of healthcare politics for several decades as a Labour MP for 13 years and Health Minister in Gordon Brown's government for three years. She has played a major part in shaping Labour's health policy during the Opposition years and is now Visiting Professor of Politics and Health Inequalities, University of East London.

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*Ann Keen*



Welcome to the fourth issue of The Link, our publication that brings together the Advancing Healthcare community: allied health professionals and healthcare scientists. We focus on this year's Advancing Healthcare Awards Northern Ireland where a record number of entries has yielded a remarkable list of finalists. And we bring you up to date on our plans for the 2025 UK awards.

### Advancing Healthcare Awards 2025

**Awards launch:** November 2024

**Closing date for entries:** end February 2025

**Judging day:** end March 2025

**Awards celebration and lunch:** 23 May 2025, Royal Garden Hotel, London

### In this issue:

- Looking ahead to 2025
- Why become a sponsor?
- How to make the most of your sponsorship
- Advancing Healthcare Awards NI: the finalists
- AHP research – alive and well in Northern Ireland
- How to sign up for *The Link*

[www.ahawards.co.uk](http://www.ahawards.co.uk)

@AHAwards

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She has personal experience of the impact of AHPs and healthcare scientists of which Ann says:

‘I have always known that healthcare is delivered by a team, but never more than when my godson and nephew Gavin at 34 years old had the diagnosis of motor neurone disease. Without AHP assistance and support his end of life would have been impossible to manage.’

Ann is a very keen football supporter and her team is Liverpool FC, also loves theatre and enjoys a comedy. Recently Molly came into Ann’s life, a Cavapoo puppy and is without a doubt keeping her very active.

The NI shortlist, published inside, includes an ‘impact statement’ after each entry to attempt to capture the real or potential outcome of these projects and initiatives. By this we mean such impact as freeing up clinical time, cutting waiting lists, reducing emergency admissions or shortening hospital stays as well as empowering patients in self-care and improving the quality of care.

This is the initiative of Michelle Tennyson, chief AHP officer, Department of Health, who is determined that health planners, strategists and managers understand the contribution that AHPs are making to transforming health services.



Michelle Tennyson,  
chief AHP officer,  
Department of Health

## Partnering with the Health Innovation Network



We are delighted that The Health Innovation Network has joined us as a Partner for the 2025 UK awards. It is the innovation arm of NHS England and the collective voice of the 15 health innovation networks across England. The Network was previously known as the Academic Health Science Network.

It works with healthcare organisations and businesses to support the spread of all types of innovation within the NHS, from new technologies to ways of working and service improvements. The aim is to improve services for patients, enable NHS efficiencies and support economic growth.

At a local level, they work to:

- **Identify** innovation and improvements to specific problems, whether that be within a healthcare, academic or business setting, creating an innovation pipeline.
- **Empower** innovators and those developing improvements to further their ideas and get them in front of the right people.
- **Advance** the uptake and spread of innovation and improvements by delivering national programmes and initiatives within the NHS and social care.

At a national level, their goal is to bring individual health innovation networks together to create a collaborative network with an authoritative voice and greater impact, highlighting successes and sharing best practice to achieve change on a wider scale.

With this partnership in place, we will be helping our finalists to link with their local Network so that their ideas can be incubated.

<https://thehealthinnovationnetwork.co.uk/>



# For you as a sponsor

As experienced organisers of awards programmes, we are convinced of their power to reward and recognise in a powerful and long-lasting way, not only the winners and finalists but also to bring huge and sometimes unexpected benefits to sponsors and supporters. Here's how:

## Increasing your visibility and recognition

Sponsoring an award greatly increases your visibility. Your organisation's name and logo are displayed on promotional materials, social media, during the awards ceremony, and in follow-up media coverage, providing planned and consistent marketing with as much or as little input from you.

Associating your organisation with excellence and success in a particular field enhances your reputation. Being linked to an awards programme that celebrates achievements and innovation enhances your reputation and image.

## Networking opportunities

You can engage directly with your target audience, whether they are potential participants, customers, partners, or employees. We facilitate this through offering judging opportunities, the option to offer educational benefits to finalists, networking at the ceremony, and on-going relationships. This engagement leads to new collaborations or business relationships. Sponsoring an award offers you opportunities to network with these key players in health and social care, fostering valuable connections and potential development and business opportunities.

## Giving Back to the Community:

Supporting these awards shows that you are investing in the healthcare community and, more particularly, that part of the healthcare workforce which is often overlooked and not properly understood. We invite

“*These Awards have come along way over the past 20 years and I am committed to work with Chamberlain Dunn and other professional leaders to further develop these awards, to bring in more supporters and sponsorship to enable us to shine a brighter light on the role of healthcare scientists and AHPs.*”

Professor Dame Sue Hill,  
chief scientific officer, NHS England

you to offer educational opportunities to finalists to reinforce their achievement.

## Marketing and promotion

Sponsorship provides content for marketing campaigns, including social media, blogs, and press releases. Highlighting your organisation's involvement in prestigious awards boosts your marketing initiatives.

## Brand differentiation

Stand out from the crowd! Sponsoring high-profile awards differentiates you from your competitors, positioning you as a leader and innovator in your sector.

## Morale and recruitment

Your people will feel proud to work for an organisation that supports excellence and innovation which can improve morale and engagement within your organisation.

By sponsoring an award, you will achieve a blend of increased visibility, enhanced reputation, strategic networking, and support for your marketing initiatives, all of which can contribute to your strategic development.

The sponsorship brochure, available [here](#), includes more information about AHPs and healthcare scientists, background to the Awards and the sponsor packages.



# Meet our sponsors and supporters

Building up to relaunching the UK Awards in November, we are delighted to welcome some new supporters and some loyal friends to help us extend the reach and impact of the Awards.

## Association for Laboratory Medicine

‘The Advancing Healthcare Awards is an excellent platform for celebrating exceptional work and innovation in our field. We are delighted to officially support the awards and help highlight the invaluable contributions of clinical scientists in improving patient outcomes.’

*Victoria Logan, chief executive, LabMed*



## Council of Deans

‘The Council of Deans of Health is delighted to be a supporter of the Advancing Healthcare Awards. The awards provide a fantastic opportunity to showcase the achievements of our incredible healthcare professionals, raise awareness of the diversity of roles within health and care, and celebrate the many contributions of health and care professionals to the health and wellbeing of society.’

*Ed Hughes, CEO, Council of Deans*



## British and Irish Orthoptic Society

‘The AHA awards are crucial for allied health professions being able to celebrate the fantastic work and innovation happening on a regular basis to provide the best care to patients. For smaller professions such as Orthoptics this visibility is key to ensure that other professions and stakeholders understand the vital role we play in the lives of our patients. BIOS is therefore happy to be a keen supporter of the awards.’

*Craig Murray, chair, BIOS*



## Health Innovation Network

The Health Innovation Network is the innovation arm of the NHS and the collective voice of the 15 health innovation networks across England. We work with healthcare organisations and businesses to support the spread of all types of innovation within the NHS, from new technologies to ways of working and service improvements. We do this to improve services for patients, enable NHS efficiencies and support economic growth.



## British Society of Echocardiography

A membership organisation whose mission is the protection and preservation of health and the effective relief of sickness by:

- the advancement of education and training and the promotion of best practice in echocardiography in relation to the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease
- promoting high standards of professional competence in echocardiography for the protection and benefit of the public
- providing or facilitating training for those involved in the practice of echocardiography.



# Focusing on you

## – maximising the benefits of sponsorship

A distinct – and unusual – feature in our benefits package for sponsors is your own Focus Week during the entry period where we work with you to spotlight your award and your organisation.

Joy Shepherd, our marketing and programme development manager, who has been involved in many Focus Weeks, shares some tips on how to get the most from it.



*IBMS showed their previous winners in this collage as part of their Focus Week to attract entrants to this year's Awards.*

The idea of the Focus Week for our award sponsors is so that we offer each award its own focused time. Of course we also encourage sponsors to promote their award and the whole programme throughout the entry period. We make this as easy as possible for you with media releases, banners and other materials to use on social media.

We will agree with you well in advance the date that works best for you during the entry period. It is usually best to avoid times when you have major events that generate their own social media. We avoid the Christmas/New Year weeks as focus is usually elsewhere.

### Ideas to try include:

- If you are a regular sponsor, look back at previous winners – ask them for quotes, link to their case study, create a story (eg the father and daughter team that won overall winner), use photos or videos of winners at the awards ceremony

- If you are a new sponsor, use the Week to announce why you are supporting the awards and why people should enter
- Remember the Week is to promote your award, but it is also to promote your organisation and its current activities
- If you can, plan a week's worth of social media activity so that interest builds with a different 'story' each day
- Link to blogs, and upcoming events on your website
- Pick a week when you can link to a particular, relevant theme – eg World Mental Health Day or Sustainability awareness
- Ensure that you tag influencers in your world, which is great way to help smaller organisations punch above their weight.
- And do call on our experience if you need some fresh ideas.

[joy@chamberdunn.co.uk](mailto:joy@chamberdunn.co.uk)

# Celebrating the impact of AHPs and healthcare scientists in Northern Ireland and beyond

A record number of entries were received this year, so the judges' task was considerable. Our aim is to clearly spell out what these examples of innovative practice mean in the context of the impact on patients, and the health and social care services.

The winners are announced at a dinner on 10 October at the Stormont Hotel, Belfast. Here are the shortlisted entries with a short summary of their potential or real impact:

## AWARD FOR CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

**Dysphagia training, leading the way across the UK**

*Alison Ferris, AHP Consultant, Public Health Agency, and Fiona McCallion, Assistant Head, HSC Clinical Education Centre*

**Impact:** providing training packages to the public and healthcare staff increased awareness of eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties, freeing up clinical time to help bring waiting lists down.

**Northern Ireland Ambulance Service cardiac arrest masterclass project**

*Clinical Education Team, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service*

**Impact:** this new approach and vision is changing the culture of education and training in NIAS, focusing on non-technical skills, teamwork and life-saving interventions with the aim of improving survival rates.

**Sensory Motor Circuits in Primary Schools**

*Children Core Occupational Therapy team and RISE NI Occupational Therapy team, Southern Health and Social Care Trust*

**Impact:** teachers and classroom assistants can now access training and resources to support children with OT needs ensuring early intervention and building capacity to reduce waiting times for OT services.

## AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CANCER CARE



*Sponsored by Macmillan Cancer Support*

**Cancer prehabilitation project**

*The Prehabilitation team, Northern Health and Social Care Trust*

**Impact:** enabling people to improve their physical, nutritional and emotional wellbeing before treatment, to enhance treatment tolerance, recovery and beyond. Demonstrating the value of a dedicated AHP cancer prehabilitation team.

**Macmillan Advanced Practitioner Oncology Dietitians – impact of early intervention and enhanced recovery**

*Michelle Ruddy and Aine O'Neill, Macmillan Advanced Practitioner Oncology Dietitians, Ciara McSherry, Macmillan Clinical Lead Oncology Dietitian, Western Health and Social Care Trust*

**Impact:** encouraging nutritionally vulnerable patients with head, neck and upper gastrointestinal cancer to improve fitness before treatment resulted in reduced hospital admission, more treatment options, improved quality of life, fitness for surgery and ability to recover.

**Advanced cancer toolkit**

*Macmillan Community Palliative Care Service Improvement Team, Northern Health and Social Care Trust*

**Impact:** Filling a gap in available information to patients with advanced cancer, this project used an exemplary model of co-design to create a strong service- user focused service. The toolkit is accessible to anyone, easy to update and readily replicable.

## AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN A SUPPORT ROLE

**Personalised memory aids**

*Julie McCullough, Rehabilitation Coach, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust*

**Impact:** working alongside people with brain injury and their families to co-produce memory aids, tailored

to individual needs to enhance daily functioning and quality of life. Now being widely adopted.

**Swallow Aware Campaign**

*Alison McCusker, Project Manager for Dysphagia NI, Public Health Agency*

**Impact:** supporting people with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties by engaging with service users, families and healthcare professionals; harnessing communication routes and social media to reach out to the hospitality industry, to prevent hospital admissions.

**Podiatry Assistant Practitioner, providing support, advice and foot health education for patient living with diabetes**

*Northern Ireland Regional Podiatry Assistant Practitioners teams*

**Impact:** podiatry assistant practitioners, now in all five Trusts, help patients to manage their own foot care and to understand risk factors so maximising the resource available to the podiatry service.

## AWARD FOR MASTERS CLINICAL RESEARCH

*Sponsored by Ulster University*

**An evaluation of a speech and language therapy swallow service for adults with intellectual disability**

*Angela Crocker, Lead Clinical Speech and Language Therapist, Belfast Health and*



*Awards judges at work at the Clinical Education Centre in September*

#### Social Care Trust

**Impact:** this research significantly enhances understanding and management of dysphagia in adults with intellectual disability to benefit patients and healthcare services by identifying common risk factors and effective interventions.

#### Exploring access to community neurorehabilitation for people with progressive neurological conditions

*Shona Pryde, Advanced Practitioner Physiotherapist, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and co-authors Owen Williams, Margaret O'Hare, Carolyn Murdock and Dr Katy Pedlow*

**Impact:** this research has enhanced understanding of key healthcare issues to improve holistic care of people living with PNC, highlighting what good access should look like from their perspective and how it can be implemented.

#### An evaluation of the demographics, characteristics and healthcare utilisation of people with asthma referred to an Ambulatory Respiratory Hub

*Wesley Henry, Advanced Practitioner Physiotherapist, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust*

**Impact:** the Hub has reduced pressure on hospital services and pressure on primary care for patients with poorly controlled asthma, demonstrating that ambulatory care should be considered as an alternative to hospital admission.

#### AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP

*Sponsored by the Institute of Biomedical Science*



#### Milkshakes Matter: a collaborative approach to enhancing the nutritional and dysphagia care of frail nursing home residents

*Heather Stevenson, Speech and Language Therapist, and Katherine Hudson, Dietitian, Northern Health and Social Care Trust*

**Impact:** a collaborative improvement initiative which enhanced the quality and safety of nutritional and dysphagia care, demonstrating strong leadership, excellent partnership working to improve patient safety and care.

#### Northern Ireland quality standard for imaging team

*Richard Gould, Senior Project Manager, Regional Medical Imaging Board, Strategic Planning and Performance Group, Department of Health, Mark Cadden, Quality Standard for Imaging Lead, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and the team across Southern, Western, Northern, and Belfast Health and Social Care Trusts*

**Impact:** they embedded the Quality Standard for Imaging and other awards of Accreditation to give third party recognition that imaging services show competence to deliver high quality services by competent staff in a safe environment.

#### Respiratory Investigation and Sleep Diagnostic Service

*Lisa McManus, Chief Respiratory Physiologist, Western Health and Social Care Trust*

**Impact:** this important service allowed patients to access essential investigations close to home so providing excellent care across many specialties, increasing service capacity and reducing waiting times.

#### Northern Ireland Healthcare Science steering group

*Sinead Fitzpatrick, Senior Cardiac Physiologist, Letterkenny University Hospital and Western Health and Social Care Trust*

**Impact:** Healthcare Science group emerged on a virtual platform during COVID and has developed fast to support healthcare scientists across NI, with such issues as education and training and patient safety.

#### AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE DELIVERY BY AN AHP OR HEALTHCARE SCIENTIST WORKING OUTSIDE THE NHS

##### Replicating the primary care role

*Jamie Scott, Primary Care Paramedic, GP Federation of NI and Lecturer of Paramedic Science, Ulster University*

**Impact:** this pilot project expanded patients access to care, streamlined service delivery and addressed gaps in the system; with the potential to transform not only frontline service delivery but also building new ways to enhance the workforce.

##### Addressing a critical gap in mental health support for children

*Louise Kelly and Karen Diamond, Music Therapists, Resilient Rhythms*

**Impact:** whole class workshops empower teachers and children to understand and manage mental health challenges with practical tools and strategies to prevent crisis and foster resilience.

#### AWARD FOR PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN PUBLIC HEALTH



*Sponsored by the Public Health Agency*

##### INTERACT project

*Claire Hallowell, Complex Case Team Manager, and Aidan McDonnell, Complex Case Team Paramedic, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, with the collaborative team at the British Red Cross*

**Impact:** this addressed the issue of Ambulance Service Frequent Callers,

ensuring that their health and social care needs are met while reducing demand for ambulance services and emergency departments – and with an estimated net annual saving of £1.3m.

#### Options, advice, knowledge osteoarthritis knee: The OAK programme West Belfast

*Arlene Blair, First Contact Physiotherapy Practitioner West Belfast Federation, and Trudy Matchett, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*

**Impact:** the OAK programme (Options, Advice and Knowledge) helps people with knee osteoarthritis to access support for exercise, weight and pain management to self-manage effectively and reduce reliance on medical services where there are long delays.

#### Live well for a longer healthy life

*Suzanne Kennedy, Consultant Physiotherapist, Northern Health and Social Care Trust and Nuala Lamont, Senior Practice Manager, Causeway GP Federation*

**Impact:** this project showed that small changes can make profound health improvements, reducing risk of obesity-related health conditions, referring patients to a healthy lifestyle programme, encourage behavioural changes with increased physical activity.

#### AWARD FOR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

*Sponsored by the Clinical Education Centre, part of the Business Services Organisation*



#### The Speech and Language Therapy led ENT Parallel clinic service – a transformational pathway

*Carolyn Greer and Laura Connolly, Specialist Advanced Practitioner Speech and Language Therapists, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust*

**Impact:** an advanced practitioner SLT- led clinic has reduced wait by over 7 years for patients with voice and upper airway conditions, with approximately 90% never having to see an ENT doctor, and 70% not needing further input from SLT.

#### Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Integrated Clinical Hub

*Karl Bloomer, Consultant Paramedic (Urgent Care), Northern Ireland Ambulance Service*

**Impact:** this directs 999 callers to the most appropriate healthcare at the point of their call, ensuring they Get It Right First Time for patients, making emergency ambulances more readily available to get to the sickest, quickest with potential savings of £200 per Hear and Treat call.



**Expansion of Southern Trust Acute Care at Home Team**

*Niamh Canavan, Physiotherapist, Catherine Murchan, Occupational Therapist, and Yvonne Hanna, Team Manager, Acute Care at Home Team, Southern Health and Social Care Trust*  
**Impact:** this hospital at home service has reduced inappropriate referrals from hospital by 25%, demonstrating value for money by bed days saved, while being able to treat unwell older people at home. Development plans are in place.

**Occupational Therapy – advanced practice microneedling service in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Regional Burns Unit**

*Ursula Kelly, Occupational Therapy Assistant Service Manager, and Jude Gordon, Clinical Lead Occupational Therapist, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*  
**Impact:** advanced practice OTs use microneedling techniques to improve burns scars and so improving psychosocial wellbeing for patients, while reducing the need for surgery and freeing up surgeons' time.

**AWARD FOR THE BEST COLLABORATION ACROSS CLINICAL, ACADEMIA AND INDUSTRY**

*Sponsored by the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine*



**Development of bespoke virtual therapy-modernising treatment delivery, utilising current resources efficiently and meeting NICE guidelines**

*Emma Dunn, Occupational Therapist Advanced Practitioner Level 2, and Dermot Quinn, Occupational Therapist, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, in collaboration with eXRT Intelligent Healthcare*

**Impact:** patients are more motivated and engaged, with increased adherence to rehab plans, so speeding up recovery time, increasing capacity and speeding up hospital discharge. Easy to use, and adaptable to various OT environments.

**Out of hospital cardiac arrest 5-year review research study**

*Julia Wolfe, Research and Development Manager, and Emma McCorkell, Research Paramedic, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, in collaboration with Professor Adele Marshall and Dr Aleks Novakovic from Queen's University Belfast, funded by Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke*

**Impact:** with NIAS becoming a more research-active organisation, this five-year retrospective review of Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest aims to improve survival rates and patient outcomes by developing new services and streamlining existing processes.

**ADVOCATE - advancing radiotherapy techniques as a team**

*The FAST clinic team, Northern Ireland Cancer Care Centre. Team represented by Stacey Conway, lead clinical research radiographer, NI Cancer Trials Network, Grace Totten, clinical research radiographer, NI Cancer Trials Network and Sarah-Jane Flynn, urology site specialist radiographer.*

**Impact:** this innovative clinic enables patients to access advanced image guided radiotherapy techniques through prostate cancer clinical trials, reducing radiotherapy from 39 treatments to five, saving 134 hours of radiotherapy, enabling more patients to be treated faster.

**RISING STARS**

**Rebecca Johnston**

*Occupational Therapist, South Eastern, who takes responsibility to drive change – a great source of knowledge and support in implementing Encompass*

**Alix Robinson**

*Occupational Therapist, South Eastern, who is acknowledged as a Super Duper Superuser of Encompass, supporting colleagues to gain new skills*

**Jenny McAliste**

*Orthoptist, Northern, who has showed remarkable skill, dedication and innovation in promoting the orthoptic service - and is an Encompass Superuser*

**Caitriona Breen**

*Dietitian, Western, who ensures goals are met and plays a vital role in training future dietitians – an excellent role model*

**Aoife Cassidy**

*Occupational Therapist, Belfast, who quickly adapted to Encompass, leading on staff training across the Trust and devising instruction sheets*

**Emma McCorkell**

*Research Paramedic, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, who as the first research paramedic has shown passion and*

*enthusiasm, ensuring production of high-quality results to improve patient outcomes*

**Naomi Hoffart**

*Occupational Therapist, Shannon Clinic, Belfast, who is Shannon's superstar using her initiative, creativity and passion for others within a challenging and restrictive environment*

**Meabh Morris**

*Rotational Band 5 Physiotherapist, Belfast, who provides outstanding care in the community and helping to ensure the smooth running of the team as they adapt to new processes*

**Daniel Deehan**

*Occupational Therapist, Southern, who has pioneered a fieldwork placement where in works in clinical area while being proactive in research activity*

**Lauren McCartan**

*Occupational Therapist, Reablement team, Belfast, for whom nothing or nobody is a problem – she sees the opportunity to help. And she has recently donated her stem cells to a stranger*

**Ashleigh McKee**

*Specialist Community Dietitian, South Eastern, who is a passionate advocate for dietetics and has worked on campaigning groups to promote dietitians and healthy eating*

**Jake Deeney**

*Band 5 Physiotherapist, Belfast, whose holistic approach impressed patients and colleagues alike – and he immediately grasped the Encompass system*

**Rebecca Hughes**

*Specialist Occupational Therapist, Belfast, who works with extremely complex Long Covid patients, instilling hope, to motivate and provide the right challenge during their rehabilitation*

**On the night, we are also celebrating:**

- The Patricia Blackburn Award for significant contribution and achievement, sponsored by the HCS Leadership Centre
- Reservist of the Year Award, sponsored by the Ministry of Defence
- The Student Paramedic of the Year Award, sponsored by Ulster University
- The Outstanding Undergraduate of the Year Award, sponsored by Ulster University
- The Award for special recognition for individuals outside the AHP community who have made a substantial contribution to the work of AHPs
- Overall Winner



# Showcasing AHP research in Northern Ireland

Over 115 allied health professionals attended the inaugural Northern Ireland AHP Research and Innovation Conference on 11<sup>th</sup> September in the Balmoral Hotel in Belfast with the theme of *Embracing a population health approach*.

The day was opened by chief AHP officer, Michelle Tennyson, and featured keynote presentations and discussions on:

- **Community appointment days:** an experiment in new models of care from Laura Finucane and Natalie Blunt, Sussex MSK Partnership Central
- **Causeway Healthy Kids project** from Claire Galway, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
- **Act Now: Tackling Health Inequalities in MSK** by Sue Brown, CEO of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance (ARMA)
- **Learnings from a Churchill Fellowship** from Heather McFarlane, Public Health Agency.

With 48 contributors spread across two rooms, the engaging and interactive platform presentations, rapid 5 presentations and poster presentations stimulated discussion, maximised shared learning and generated networking opportunities.

The conference emphasised the importance of supporting and developing new AHP researchers with a session on how to obtain future funding for AHPs' research time via the NI Health and Social Care Research Resilience and Growth funding scheme. Attendees left with a deeper understanding of the breadth of AHP R&I work across NI, as well as the mechanisms and methodologies used to set-up and deliver such projects.

A prize for Best poster and Best Rapid-5 presentation, as judged by members of the conference scientific committee, was awarded to Emma Mullan from Western Health and Social Care Trust SureStart for her *Play and Discover* poster and Paul Corns from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service for his presentation on *Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Masterclass Training* in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

The conference was sponsored by the Public Health Agency NI and run in partnership with the Department of Health and HSC Trust AHP leads.

The conference committee was co-chaired by Helen Welch, consultant physiotherapist in Belfast, Community for Allied Health Professions in



From left to right, Helen Welch; Dr Sonyia McFadden, CAPHR NI hub co-lead /Senior Lecturer in Diagnostic Radiography and Imaging, Research Director of the Institute of Nursing and Health Research, Ulster University; Dr Katherine O'Neill, CAHPR NI hub co-lead / Change Project Manager, iREACH Health, Queens University Belfast

Research, NI hub (CAHPR NI) /National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Research Champion, and Heather McFarlane, consultant AHP, Public Health Agency.

All accepted abstracts will be available to view on the AHP pages on the Department of Health web site. Plans for the next conference are already underway for September 2025.

## CAHPR NI hub

- CAHPR is the community for AHP research. It is a network of volunteers that promote and support AHP research at every level. The NI hub is lead and facilitated by Dr Katherine O'Neill (QUB), Dr Sonyia McFadden (UU), Helen Welch (BHSCT), Veronica Lynch (BHSCT) and Jodie Mills (UU).
- The CAHPR vision is to improve the health and care of the UK through AHP research, evidence-based practice, evaluation, and innovation.
- The CAHPR mission is to promote excellence and inclusive engagement in research, evidence-based practice, evaluation, and innovation in all allied health professions.
- CAHPR/NIHR Research Champions work across their local clinical research network acting as role models and activists to champion the active involvement of AHPs in clinically-focussed research activities. They build momentum and maximise the visibility and impact of AHP research.
- Please visit the NI hub page of the CAHPR webpage and email [nicahpr@gmail.com](mailto:nicahpr@gmail.com) for regular bulletins.

# Two new leaders to boost AHP research

Two recent appointments are designed to encourage AHPs' involvement in research.

At the National Institute for Healthcare Research, **Dr Lisa Ledger** has been appointed assistant director of allied health professions. The new role will develop national initiatives to provide research career opportunities for AHPs.

She will provide leadership for AHPs who lead, support or deliver NIHR research and also support those who take part in [NIHR academic research training](#).

Dr Ledger said: 'I am delighted to be given this opportunity, to shape AHPs research capacity and capability, creating visibility and direction at a national level. I am really passionate about the unique and vital contribution that AHPs make in the delivery of high quality, best evidenced, health and social care.'



Dr Lisa Ledger



Corrina Grimes

**Corrina Grimes** is the new director of the Community for AHP Research (CAHPR), on a part time basis. She is national deputy director at NHS England, an Atlantic fellow for Equity in Brain Health at the Global Brain Health Institute, Trinity College Dublin and UCSF in San Francisco.

Her background is in nutrition and dietetics. She was AHP consultant at the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland and is a visiting research fellow at Trinity College, Dublin.

She commented: 'I am thrilled to build upon the remarkable work of CAHPR by growing our community and enhancing our AHP research capacity and capability.'

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk>  
[www.cahpr.csp.org.uk](http://www.cahpr.csp.org.uk)

# NHS England launches enhanced practice apprenticeship schemes

In a key workforce development initiative, NHS England have launched AHP Enhanced Practice Apprenticeship Schema. It is a priority ambition in the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan and paves a clear career pathway for 10 allied health professions, empowering them to further enhance their skills and decision-making across crucial areas of practice. Enhanced practice will address the gap between early career stages and advanced practice, offering profession-specific training tailored to key pathways of care.

So far the initiative covers occupational therapists, operating department practitioners,

osteopaths, paramedics, physiotherapists, prosthetists and orthotists, diagnostic radiographers, therapeutic radiographers and dietitians.

NHS England says: 'By investing in enhanced practice, AHPs will be better equipped to support the NHS, improve retention, and meet the population's needs. From specialised condition management to bolstering integration of health and care services, these apprenticeships will drive innovation and excellence in patient care.'

[AHP enhanced practice | NHS England | Workforce, training and education \(hee.nhs.uk\)](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/workforce-training-and-education)

## HCPC: promoting revised standards of practice

The Health and Care Professions Council have produced a simple, clear poster for workplaces to support those who would like to raise awareness of the revisions to the standards.



## News notes

- The Science Council has elected as its next President, Professor Catherine Ross CSci CBIol, who is chief scientific officer for the Scottish Government. Professor Ross has also been appointed chair of the allied professionals taskforce within the European Society of Cardiology.
- The launch of the Global Allied Health Network is taking place at the International Allied Health Conference in Singapore. 1 -5 November 2024. Speakers include NHS England's Beverley Harden MBE. For more information: <https://iahc2024.com/>
- The Aspiring Allies campaign is an awareness and engagement initiative built around raising the profile of AHP careers, with information on roles and provides a free virtual work experience programme to anyone considering a career in health and social care. Share ideas here <https://solvingtogether.crowdicity.com/>
- The Academy for Healthcare Science is hosting drop-in sessions for Clinical Research Practitioners to explain the Equivalence Process. These are happening on 14 October, 21 November and 12 October. More information from [equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk](mailto:equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk)

## Our sponsors and supporters across all our Advancing Healthcare programmes include:



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



## Join us as a sponsor or supporter

Our ambitious plans for the UK Awards in 2025 offer a far wider range of benefits to our sponsors and supporters. We will be expanding the number of awards with new themes that we are developing, but still offering the scope for sponsors to run with their own award topics. Sponsors have their own branded table at the awards lunch, involvement in the judging, the opportunity to include news in The Link, and of course, intensive social media activity during the promotional period and beyond.

Contact [ali@chamberdunn.co.uk](mailto:ali@chamberdunn.co.uk)

## Sign up



To sign up to receive The Link, go to

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Chamberlain Dunn  
The Old Candlemakers  
West Street  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN7 2NZ

Telephone  
020 8334 4500

Email  
[mail@chamberdunn.co.uk](mailto:mail@chamberdunn.co.uk)

[www.chamberlaindunn.co.uk](http://www.chamberlaindunn.co.uk)



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