



UNITED KINGDOM  
**ADVANCING  
HEALTHCARE  
AWARDS 2026**

# WINNERS' GUIDE

ADVANCING HEALTHCARE AWARDS UK 2026

**Celebrating all the entries,  
presented on 19 June 2026 at  
Royal Garden Hotel, Kensington**



Chamberlain Dunn Events  
The Old Candlemakers, West Street, Lewes BN7 2NZ  
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**INNOVATION  
CREATIVITY  
LEADERSHIP  
COMPASSION**

# OVERALL WINNER



**Leeds Community Healthcare Research Secondment Initiative**  
Dr Jill Halstead-Rastrick, Clinical Research Lead, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust and the Leeds Community NHS Research Team

## THE JUDGES COMMENTED:

“ The judges thought this project showed outstanding leadership in changing research culture. It empowers underrepresented cohorts in research leadership and offers individualised development opportunities for maximum impact. The team have enabled patient voices to shape meaningful change, with work that goes beyond research itself, creating trust, improving inclusion and ensuring that prevention is built into the process. ”

READ MORE ON P14



# Congratulations to all our winners and finalists

Welcome to the work of the finalists of the 2026 UK Advancing Healthcare Awards for allied health professionals, healthcare scientists and those who work alongside them.

The UK Advancing Healthcare Awards ceremony was held in Kensington, London at the Royal Garden Hotel on Friday 19 June, during which we celebrated the achievements of our finalists and heard from many inspirational speakers throughout the afternoon.

This guide is a testament to the incredible work of our entrants and their wider teams; as always, we are proud to share the experience and learning as widely as possible. This was another great year for entries with a great balance across the professions and specialties. It is a real tribute to the passion, dedication, and innovation of healthcare scientists, AHPs and those who work alongside them across the UK. Please feel free to share across your networks.

## CATEGORY SPONSORS



## SPECIAL SUPPORTERS



The live judging day was held on Monday 11 May 2026 – our huge thanks once again to Steve Jameison and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists for hosting the day. The judges found the experience to be one of difficult decisions but inspiring too, selecting winners from so many outstanding entries. This Winners' Guide summarises the work of the finalists and gives contact details should you wish to follow up any of the projects.

Entries for 2027 will open in the Autumn; meanwhile you can take a look at our 2026 stars.



Will Chamberlain-Webber

Managing director  
Chamberlain Dunn

June 2027

# Our Winners' Guide is a vital part of the Advancing Healthcare Awards programme. We are proud of it for (at least) four reasons:

- 1 It gives participants, guests, entrants and the wider healthcare world a chance to digest more fully the work of the finalists.
- 2 It is a more permanent record of the achievements of AHPs and healthcare scientists across the UK in 2025 than an awards ceremony can ever achieve – we encourage you to share these projects, innovations and ideas with your teams and wider networks.
- 3 It gives contact details for those wanting to find out more to build on their own work and to share experiences.
- 4 It helps us to stand out from the crowd – very few award organisers take the trouble to deliver this final piece of the jigsaw.

If you would like to be involved in the Advancing Healthcare Awards as a sponsor, judge or simply share some ideas about how we can develop the programme, please contact Ellie Hayden on [ellie@chamberdunn.co.uk](mailto:ellie@chamberdunn.co.uk) or call 020 8334 4500

We look forward to working with you,

The Advancing Healthcare Awards team



## The NHS England Chief Scientific Officer's award for the Outstanding Healthcare Science Service of the year

# WINNER

**Integrated Toxicology, System-Wide Impact: Providing real-time toxicology insight that strengthens frontline decision-making, improves patient outcomes, and underpins system-wide safety**

Toxicology Department, University Hospitals Birmingham

The Toxicology Department at University Hospitals Birmingham has transformed drug surveillance and patient safety through its pioneering use of advanced high-resolution mass spectrometry to detect emerging psychoactive substances and ultra-potent novel synthetic opioids. Among the first services in the UK to identify dangerous nitazene opioids and associated contaminants in illicit drugs, the team combines specialist analytical expertise with real-time drug intelligence to provide early warning of evolving threats. By working closely with clinicians, coroners, public health teams, police and addiction services, the department rapidly translates laboratory findings into harm-reduction strategies, national guidance and public health action.

The service delivers significant benefits for patients, families and healthcare systems by supporting the investigation and management of suspected overdoses, improving clinical decision-making, and enabling targeted interventions such as increased naloxone distribution. Alongside its national leadership role, the department has

invested in workforce development through apprenticeships, specialist training and mentoring, creating a highly skilled and adaptable healthcare science workforce. Its intelligence-led, collaborative model is sustainable, scalable and readily transferable across the NHS, offering a blueprint for strengthening national surveillance and protecting vulnerable populations from emerging drug threats.

“The judges felt that this team demonstrated science in action across all five domains of good scientific practice. Their truly inspirational service is expanding the boundaries of healthcare science across the wider system, responding to huge growth in demand with cross-sector working, strong communication and a patient-centred approach that has the potential to spread and scale.”



**FIND OUT MORE**

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## HIGHLY COMMENDED



**'A Breath of Fresh Care' - Transforming access to early respiratory diagnostics**

**The Early Respiratory Diagnostic Service, Armagh & Dungannon GP Federation**

This innovative, physiologist-led service brings advanced, quality-assured respiratory testing directly into primary care across 22 GP practices, improving access for a large rural population. It addresses long waiting times and the lack of a direct diagnostic pathway; provides comprehensive lung function testing enabling earlier and more accurate diagnosis of conditions such as asthma, COPD and interstitial lung disease.

Contact: [lauren.smith@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:lauren.smith@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

## FINALISTS



**Every patient matters - addressing the burden of variants of uncertain clinical significance to improve the diagnostic pathway**

**Sheffield Diagnostic Genetics Service, North East Yorkshire Genomic Medicine Service**

An innovative service improvement which systematically reviews patients previously reported with a variant of uncertain significance, recognising the significant impact unresolved results have on patients and families. By cataloguing and categorising historic VUS cases, integrating new diagnostic technologies and adapting multidisciplinary review processes with Clinical Genetics, the team has transformed the clinical utility of WGS.

Contact: [renarta.crookes@nhs.net](mailto:renarta.crookes@nhs.net)



**New Pathway of care for Adult Patients with Congenital Heart Disease: Clinical Scientist-Led Clinic**

**The Adult Congenital Heart Disease (ACHD), Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**

An innovative, evidence-based service redesign that has transformed long-term surveillance for ACHD patients. Developed in response to increasing demand, post-pandemic backlogs and workforce pressures, the fully governed Clinical Scientist-led model expanded clinic capacity, streamlined referral and follow-up processes, introducing robust clinical governance and multidisciplinary coordination.

Contact: [dario.freitas@nhs.net](mailto:dario.freitas@nhs.net)

## My inspiration: The AHCS Award for the most inspiring leader

Sponsored by the Academy for Healthcare Science

# WINNER

### Professor Catherine Ross

Chief Scientific Officer for Scotland, Scottish Government

Professor Catherine Ross inspired me by demonstrating how scientific leadership can shape whole systems.

Through her national roles, Professor Catherine Ross has consistently championed healthcare scientists, promoted inclusive leadership, and showed that credibility, compassion, and courage can coexist. Her leadership inspires not just individuals, but an entire professional community.

Her encouragement extends far beyond personal support. Through her leadership in NHS England, the Society for Cardiac Science and Technology, and now as Chief Scientific Officer for Scotland, she has created opportunities, visibility, and confidence for healthcare scientists nationally. Her advocacy for professional recognition, leadership development, and equality, particularly through her leadership of Women in Science and Engineering, has inspired many to believe their voices matter.

She leads by example, consistently reinforcing that healthcare scientists are essential leaders within the health system, not supporting roles.



Her nominator said: Professor Ross's leadership fundamentally changed how I view my role and potential within healthcare science. By championing the profession at national level, she helped normalise ambition, leadership, and progression for healthcare scientists. Her visible commitment to inclusion and development created a culture where individuals felt empowered to step forward, seek leadership opportunities, and contribute strategically. The confidence and professional identity this fostered has influenced not only my own career trajectory, but the expectations and aspirations of healthcare scientists across the system.

Professor Ross inspired my leadership development by modelling what effective, values-driven leadership looks like in practice. She demonstrated that leadership is about influence, advocacy, and creating space for others to succeed. Her approach, rooted in integrity, evidence, and inclusivity, demonstrated that leadership is not limited to title or hierarchy. By championing women and under-represented groups, and by trusting healthcare scientists to lead change, she inspired many of us to develop our own leadership voice and take responsibility for improving the system.

“The judges said that Professor Catherine Ross demonstrates outstanding leadership and exceptional clinical practice, acting as a powerful role model across the system. Her work reflects the very best of professional excellence, generosity and impact.”

## FINALISTS



### Dr Rachel Humphriss

Head of Audiology, Principal Clinical Scientist, Oxford University Hospitals

Her nominator said: Dr Rachel Humphriss inspires me through her exceptional leadership, combining scientific expertise with compassion, clarity, and integrity. She transformed the service, supported my development, and showed me how emotionally intelligent leadership empowers a team to truly thrive. Her example motivates me daily to be a better scientist and colleague.



### Dr Sofia Michopoulou

Consultant Clinical Scientist and Head of Nuclear Medicine Physics, University Hospital Southampton

Her nominator said: Dr Sofia Michopoulou is an outstanding healthcare science leader whose influence extends beyond her own achievements. As a Consultant Clinical Scientist and Head of Nuclear Medicine Physics at University Hospital Southampton, a researcher, educator, and mentor, she has shaped careers, expanded patient services, and raised the profile of clinical science.

## The Northern Ireland Government Award for Excellence in Community Partnership to Improve Population Health

# WINNER

### 'No Show, Know Why' - DNA as a signal for action

**Ashling McElvanna**, Principal Podiatrist and **Jennifer Madden**, Consultant Podiatrist, and **the Podiatry Team** at Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

This project addressed high rates of missed podiatry appointments among people with diabetes-related foot disease by reframing non-attendance as an indicator of unmet need rather than patient failure. Local audit found that 40% of patients with diabetes foot ulceration had missed multiple appointments, prompting a deeper investigation into the causes of disengagement.

Analysis of 221 patients showed that those missing two or more appointments were often living with multiple long-term conditions and socioeconomic deprivation. Qualitative follow-up identified barriers including multimorbidity, dialysis schedules, transport difficulties, financial pressures and appointment confusion. The team also reviewed local amputation data and identified patients who were entirely absent from podiatry services.

Working with patients, community pharmacy, dialysis teams and secondary care, the team co-designed targeted interventions including revised follow-up

pathways, improved discharge processes, podiatry services within the regional dialysis unit, community outreach and the rollout of IDEAL "ACT NOW" emergency foot advice cards through community pharmacies across Northern Ireland. These changes improved access to care, strengthened continuity of care and helped reduce health inequalities for patients at greatest risk of diabetes-related foot complications.

“ The judges were impressed by how this has delivered a genuinely patient-centred approach, improving quality of life through strong community partnerships and practical, accessible support. ”

## FINALISTS



**Connect With Me: Build my brain, build my future, build our society!**

**Seána Kerr**, Lead Speech and Language Therapist for SureStart, **Michelle Maguire** and **Rebecca Carey**, SureStart Speech and Language Therapists (Belfast Health and Social Care Trust), and **Tracey Ripley-McElvogue**, Co-ordinator, East Belfast SureStart

A community designed book, group programme, training package, and online resource which builds capacity in parents – providing empowering techniques to connect with their children; accelerating children's' brain development, enhancing learning, fostering good mental health, and reducing

Contact: [seana.kerr@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:seana.kerr@belfasttrust.hscni.net)



### Bringing Care Closer to Home

**Meghan White**, Clinical Specialist Occupational Therapist and **Amy Gilshan**, Occupational Therapist, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

A project that embeds an OT in care homes, co-produced with managers, staff, GPs and hospital teams. In-reach rehab, equipment and training proactively catch decline early, keeping residents safer and independent. The six-month pilot delivered up to 83% functional gain, avoided 26 admissions and 6 delays, with £81,734 ROI.

Contact: [meghan.white@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:meghan.white@wales.nhs.uk)



**FIND OUT MORE**

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## Award for Excellence in Cancer Care

Sponsored by Macmillan Cancer Support

# WINNER

### One Voice:

#### Coproducing a Laryngectomy Pathway in the Community

**Rhiannon Haag**, Clinical Lead Speech & Language Therapist and  
**Michelle Coleman**, Highly Specialist Speech & Language Therapist,  
North East London NHS Foundation Trust

One Voice is the UK's first comprehensive domiciliary laryngectomy service, co-produced with patients to support people before and after surgery. Developed during the COVID-19 pandemic and refined through ongoing collaboration with service users and partners, the programme has improved access, reduced waiting times, enhanced patient autonomy and engagement, and increased environmental sustainability.

It has also transformed the transition from hospital to home, strengthened primary care support, created a holistic lifelong communication therapy pathway, and identified key challenges affecting recovery. The model has influenced wider system training, inspired new research and community initiatives, and has been shared nationally through workshops, conferences, a website and podcast.

“

The judges were impressed by how the team have addressed a clear service gap to deliver improved patient engagement and independence, inspiring new research and community service projects across the UK.”



FIND OUT MORE

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## HIGHLY COMMENDED



### Greater Manchester Prehab4Cancer and Recovery Programme

**Zoe Merchant**, AHP Clinical Lead, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Prehab4Cancer (P4C) is a regional, needs-based, multi-modal prehabilitation programme, accessed by over 10,000 NHS cancer patients in Greater Manchester before/during cancer treatment. The service is delivered in partnership with all Greater Manchester leisure trusts (GM Active) and through exercise, nutrition and psychological interventions has shown to reduce mortality and improve clinical outcomes.

Contact: [zoe.merchant@mft.nhs.uk](mailto:zoe.merchant@mft.nhs.uk)

## FINALIST



### Development of a nationally endorsed advanced practice framework for non-surgical oncology

**Melanie Clarkson**, Senior Lecturer and Therapeutic Radiographer, Sheffield Hallam University

This development of a nationally endorsed multi professional oncology advanced practice framework standardises education and strengthens holistic cancer care. Co-produced with patients and professionals, it improves access to specialty education and retention. It is scalable and transferable, delivering a clear, system-wide impact and aims to reduce variation in advancing practice education.

Contact: [m.clarkson@shu.ac.uk](mailto:m.clarkson@shu.ac.uk)

## Rising Star award

Sponsored by Chamberlain Dunn



### Kyle Kennedy

Dietitian, NHS Lanarkshire

Kyle has made a significant impact early in his dietetic career through his commitment to prevention, health improvement and promoting the profession. From serving as a student ambassador for the BDA to influencing local and national practice as a graduate dietitian, he has embraced every opportunity to improve care. Growing up in one of Scotland's most deprived communities gave Kyle first-hand experience of health inequalities, inspiring his commitment to tackling disparities and improving outcomes through person-centred, community-focused care.



### Freddie James Wright

Scientist Training Programme Clinical Engineering, United Lincolnshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

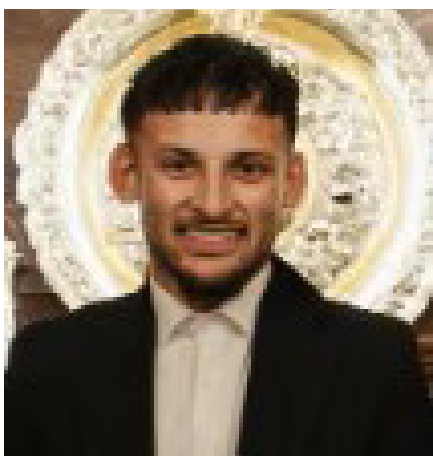
Freddie has shown exceptional initiative through a national project to improve the safe use of medical technology in community settings. Working with clinicians, engineers and policymakers, he helped develop practical solutions including workforce models, training pathways and an AI-assisted platform for device instructions. Alongside balancing clinical work and training, Freddie lives with Type 1 diabetes. His lived experience has inspired patient-centred innovations that improve support for people using medical technology outside hospital settings.



### Stephanie Quinn

Clinical Scientist, Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Stephanie has rapidly established herself as a rising clinical scientist, combining clinical practice with an emerging academic career. Since qualifying through the Scientific Training Programme in 2021, she has secured a competitive NIHR development award, published peer-reviewed research, presented internationally and been elected to the board of her professional society, while supporting STP trainees. Her research focuses on improving diagnostics and outcome measures for people with retinal disease. Through determination and commitment, she has successfully balanced clinical, academic and leadership roles in a highly competitive career pathway.



**Saraaz Khalil**

Allied Health Professional, Nursing & Midwifery Practice Educator, Specialist Radiographer & Research Academic, Yorkshire & Northern Region

Saraaz is an award-winning radiographer and AHP leader who has combined clinical expertise with national leadership in education, AI innovation and inclusive healthcare. Through teaching, mentorship, research and initiatives such as RadGuide, he has supported over 1,000 learners while influencing workforce development and radiography practice. He has overcome challenges in promoting AI adoption and improving accessibility through British Sign Language, balancing clinical, educational and national leadership roles to advance patient care and inclusion across the profession.



**Eimear Shannon**

Physiotherapist, Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Eimear has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving MSK services by developing an educational video on the impact of menopause on musculoskeletal conditions, now used across the service to support both patients and staff, helping increase awareness and confidence in an important area of clinical practice. Early in her career, Eimear overcame a distressing incident with an aggressive patient, using reflection and openness to help improve learning across her team. She continues to develop professionally by gaining additional MSK experience through evening work with sports teams alongside her NHS role.



**Genevieve Winter**

Neurologic Music Therapist (NMT), Chroma

Genevieve has made a significant impact within a specialist neurorehabilitation service by using music therapy, including group sessions and songwriting, to enhance rehabilitation and patient wellbeing. She has supported clients to record original songs and create album artwork, fostering creativity, confidence and engagement. Working within a national clinical partnership, Genevieve has successfully balanced consistent service delivery with personalised, client-centred care, demonstrating impressive professional maturity by effectively combining individual patient care with service evaluation and data collection to support ongoing improvement.



**Carl Wong**

Team Lead Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

Within five years of qualifying, Carl progressed to Specialist Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist in a major trauma centre while establishing an impressive clinical academic career. He secured a competitive NIHR Pre-doctoral Fellowship, published three peer-reviewed papers and demonstrated exceptional achievement early in his career. Balancing a demanding clinical role with research, national committee work and academic development, Carl has shown resilience and determination, forging his own clinical academic pathway and emerging as a leader in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.



**Max Thomas**

Clinical Scientist and Site Lead for Respiratory and Sleep Physiology, University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust

Max is an exceptional early-career Clinical Scientist whose work has driven service transformation, digital innovation, workforce development and national leadership. Through evidence-based pathway redesign, education and research, he has demonstrated leadership and influence well beyond his career stage. Despite balancing demanding national training, frontline clinical practice and senior leadership responsibilities, Max has successfully led service redesign, supported workforce development and contributed to national guidance and professional standards, consistently delivering high-quality patient care.



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## Welsh Government's award for creative and innovative practice

# WINNER

**Lymphaticovenous anastomosis collaboration: improving clinical and patient outcomes for people with lymphoedema in Wales**

**Dr Melanie Thomas**, Clinical Director and **Dr Cheryl Pike**, National Macmillan Innovations Lymphoedema Specialist, Lymphoedema Wales Clinical Network, Swansea Bay University Health Board

Lymphoedema is a lifelong condition requiring ongoing self-management and specialist care, with a significant impact on quality of life. To improve treatment options, the AHP-led team at Lymphoedema Wales Clinical Network worked with the Regional Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery team to introduce NHS-funded lymphaticovenous anastomosis (LVA) in Wales – the first service of its kind in the UK.

Recognising the lack of robust long-term evidence for LVA, the team evaluated prospectively collected data from 150 NHS Wales patients following surgery, providing valuable real-world evidence of the procedure's long-term benefits and supporting future service development. The experience of service users was critical in this project, and sharing their stories and supporting the development of a Patient Reported Outcome Measure helped therapists,

fundors and service providers understand what matters most to patients with lymphoedema.

This innovative approach has transformed care for patients and is reducing health inequalities by reaching even the most rural areas.

“The judges commended this team for combining specialist expertise, thoughtful service development and a clear focus on accessibility, to create a sustainable model with impact, ambition and national significance”

## HIGHLY COMMENDED



**Transforming Strabismus Services Through Advanced Orthoptist Led Care**

**Ciara McAtamney**, Paediatric Lead for Orthoptics and **Pamela Anketell**, Orthoptist Service Manager, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

The initiative tackles national Ophthalmology capacity pressures by enabling Advanced Orthoptists to undertake consenting, theatre assistance and post operative reviews for strabismus surgery. This extended scope practice boosts outpatient capacity, prevents theatre delays and reduces strabismus surgical waiting lists.

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## FINALISTS



**Embedding Speech and Language Therapists in Schools to Improve Early Intervention, Equity and Child Outcomes**

Children's Speech and Language Therapy, NHS Forth Valley

NHS Forth Valley's Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service embedded therapists in schools to deliver accessible, preventative support. This relationship based model improves equity, reduces waiting times, empowers education staff and ensures children receive the right help at the right time.

Contact: [louisa.mcguire@nhs.scot](mailto:louisa.mcguire@nhs.scot)



**Project WILSON**

**Justyna Zielska-Mikita**, Stock Holding Unit Senior Supervisor, Welsh Blood Service

The project introduced a Digital Proof of Delivery (POD) system which replaces manual, paper based checks for blood product deliveries, using barcode scanning to ensure accurate dispatch, tracking and receipt. This reduces human error, strengthens patient safety,

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FIND OUT MORE

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## Award for developing the AHP and healthcare science workforce

# WINNER

### Rad Chat

**Jo McNamara and Naman Julka Anderson,**  
Therapeutic Radiographers, Founders and Hosts of Rad Chat

Rad Chat is an innovative digital education and engagement platform that uses podcasts, social media and online learning resources to improve understanding of radiotherapy and oncology for patients, healthcare professionals and the public. Established to address limited awareness of radiotherapy, restricted access to free, high-quality CPD, and challenges in recruiting the future workforce, it has evolved into a globally recognised resource with more than 500 podcast episodes, over 10,000 social media followers and audiences in more than 140 countries. Through this, hundreds of healthcare professionals have reported meaningful changes to their clinical practice, while patients and carers have gained greater understanding and confidence in navigating cancer treatment.

A key strength of Rad Chat is its collaborative, co-produced approach. Working with charities, professional organisations, industry partners and people with lived experience, it creates

accessible educational content that promotes inclusive practice, reduces health inequalities and amplifies underrepresented voices within oncology. Alongside its popular podcast series, the platform hosts a widely used clinical image library and digital resources that support both patient education and professional learning. Its impact extends beyond oncology, influencing healthcare practice internationally and helping raise the profile of therapeutic radiography as a career.

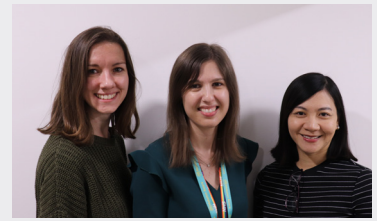
“The judges felt that Rad Chat demonstrates how digital innovation can transform education, workforce development and patient experience across healthcare.”



**FIND OUT MORE**

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## FINALISTS



**Rethinking the Role of Speech and Language Therapy Assistants (SLTAs) in Early Language Support**

**Georgia Roskin & Marie England,** Speech and Language Therapists, Whittington Health NHS Trust, with the collaborative Early Language Support for Every Child (ELSEC) team across Barnet and Islington

This innovative workforce transformation has redefined the role of SLTAs, shifting them from a traditional support function to a central role in delivering early language intervention and building capacity across the education system. In response to rising demand, workforce shortages and limited specialist capacity, the model empowers SLTAs – under specialist SLT supervision – to lead whole-cohort screening, support early identification of speech, language and communication needs, and coach school staff to deliver universal and targeted interventions.

Contact: [georgia.roskin@nhs.net](mailto:georgia.roskin@nhs.net)



**RCI Assist: a digital decision-support tool advancing confidence, consistency and capability across transfusion laboratory services**

**Helen Thom,** Pathology Business Development Manager and **Alexander Hogan,** Consultant Clinical Scientist Trainee, NHS Blood and Transplant

This is an innovative digital decision-support tool designed to strengthen the healthcare science workforce by standardising complex transfusion investigation pathways and embedding expert guidance into everyday laboratory practice. Developed in response to national workforce pressures, increasing demand and variation in transfusion services, the tool provides structured, real-time support for biomedical scientists, improving confidence, consistency and clinical decision-making regardless of experience level.

Contact: [helen.thom@nhsbt.nhs.uk](mailto:helen.thom@nhsbt.nhs.uk)



# British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics award for evidencing impact and excellence in prosthetics and orthotics

Sponsored by the British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics

## WINNER

### British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics: Career Outreach and Work Experience Initiative

#### The Career Outreach Team, British Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics

To tackle the critical workforce challenges facing Prosthetics and Orthotics (P&O), including limited public awareness and the highest attrition rate of any Allied Health Profession (14%), the team launched the profession's first national Careers Outreach and Work Experience initiatives. Bringing together NHS organisations, private providers, charities, manufacturing partners and people with lived experience, these programmes have created a coordinated, cross-sector approach to raising the profile of P&O and inspiring the next generation of professionals.

The Careers Outreach programme delivers talks and tailored resources to schools and colleges across the UK, while the Work Experience initiative has provided hands-on placements for around 150 participants across NHS, private, charity and manufacturing settings, offering insight into the wide range of careers within P&O. The innovative "Design a Prosthetic Limb for a Superhero" competition has further engaged young people through creativity and inclusion, encouraging them to explore how prosthetics support movement, identity and independence.

Co-produced with service users and partners including the Limbless Association and Limb Art, these initiatives combine education, lived experience and collaboration to maximise impact. Supported by freely available resources, structured guidance and strong sector partnerships, they provide a sustainable and scalable model for workforce development, helping to strengthen the recruitment pipeline, improve understanding of P&O and inspire future professionals across the UK.

“The judges were impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm of this team who by giving their own time and energy, have built real momentum, inspiring others, strengthening visibility and helping to create a more sustainable workforce for the future across communities nationally.”

## HIGHLY COMMENDED



### Queen Mary's Hospital Orthotic department, Pectus Carinatum Bracing Service

Jack Presnell, Assistant Clinical Lead – Orthotist, Andy Kelly and Tom Williams, Senior Technicians, and Diana Chau, Orthotist, Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton

The improved pectus carinatum bracing initiative that has been implemented at Queen Mary's Roehampton has had a significant impact on improving both patient and business outcomes. The results include expedited access for patients to commence pectus bracing, reduced environmental impact and reduced department costs through utilising in-house technicians.

Contact: [zoe.lemotterobinson@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:zoe.lemotterobinson@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

## FINALIST



### Active Neuro Rehabilitation Hub – Gateshead Amputee Service

Gemma Stoddart, Lead Physiotherapist, Rachel Lees, Lead Occupational Therapist and Gail Archer, Senior Lead Occupational Therapist, Active Care Group and the Active Neuro Rehabilitation Hub at Gateshead

Established in 2023, the amputee service was developed to address the lack of integrated prosthetic and rehabilitation support in the Northeast. The service combines prosthetic clinics with physiotherapy and occupational therapy, reducing travel for patients and improving coordinated care. A community-led support group further strengthens rehabilitation and peer support.

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## AHP Research excellence award

Sponsored by National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)

# WINNER & OVERALL WINNER

### Leeds Community Healthcare Research Secondment Initiative

**Dr Jill Halstead-Rastrick**, Clinical Research Lead, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust and the Leeds Community NHS Research Team

Dr Jill Halstead-Rastrick and team recognised a need to expand the Trust's research portfolio and team, and also to provide research development opportunities for AHPs and in response they established an annual secondment of 1-2 days each week working with the research team. So far, the initiative has created opportunities for five AHPs to be integrated into the Trust's research team, where they have enjoyed 12 months of exposure to research activities and support. During their secondments, these AHPs have supported growth in the Trust's research activity through a range of activities including: recruiting to research trials; delivering research trial interventions; principal investigator roles; promoting research activity within their clinical areas; supporting research engagement events and activities; supporting research activity mapping work and evaluating inclusion and barriers for patient participation in research trials.

These activities have enabled the Trust to deliver 3 national trials and offer opportunities for patients to take part in these trials that they would not otherwise have had (CHART, TRICEPS,

TELSTAR). They have increased awareness of the benefits of research activity and helped to develop a positive research culture and helped to capture important information about the Trust's current research culture, activity and aspirations which have been shared at national forums and are being used to inform local strategic planning.

“The judges thought this project showed outstanding leadership in changing research culture. It empowers underrepresented cohorts in research leadership and offers individualised development opportunities for maximum impact. It enabled patient voices to shape meaningful change, with work that goes beyond research itself, creating trust, improving inclusion and ensuring that prevention is built into the process.”

## HIGHLY COMMENDED



### From Patient Narratives to National Impact: An AHP-Led Research Programme Transforming Radiotherapy Care

**Lisa Ashmore**, Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences and Therapeutic Radiographer, Lancaster University and the teams on The GRACE & Gynae Narratives Research Projects

This programme transforming radiotherapy care improves experiences and outcomes for people undergoing radiotherapy for gynaecological cancer. Through co-produced research and multidisciplinary collaboration, it delivers measurable improvements, influences policy, strengthens research culture building AHP research capacity across the UK..

Contact: [l.ashmore@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:l.ashmore@lancaster.ac.uk)

## FINALISTS



### Vision Impairment Screening Assessment – the VISA tool

**Professor Fiona Rowe**, Professor of Orthoptics, University of Liverpool and the VISION Research Group

This project validated a brief clinical screening tool for detecting functional vision problems in stroke survivors. By combining lived experience insight with professional expertise, the project adopted a co-design approach, ensuring it addressed real-world challenges, improved usability and increased staff confidence.

Contact: [rowef@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:rowef@liverpool.ac.uk)



### Music Therapy Embedded in the Life of Dementia Inpatient Care (MELODIC)

**Annie Heiderscheit**, Professor of Music Therapy/ Director of Music Therapy Research and Naomi Thompson, Post Doctoral Research, Cambridge Institute for Music Therapy Research

This is a co-designed intervention development study between Anglia Ruskin University's Cambridge Institute for Music Therapy Research and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust establishing a protocol and guide to embed music therapy and music in ward culture, to reduce distress experienced by people with dementia..

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FIND OUT MORE

[Jill.halstead-rastrick@nhs.net](mailto:Jill.halstead-rastrick@nhs.net)

## Award for the best collaboration across clinical, academia and industry

# WINNER

### NeuroRehabilitation OnLine (NROL): A Nationally Scalable Digital Rehabilitation Model Enabled by Cross Sector Collaboration

**Louise Connell**, Professor of Allied Health Rehabilitation and Physiotherapist, Lancaster University and East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust, and **Adam Partington**, NROL Operational Lead, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

NeuroRehabilitation OnLine (NROL) is an innovative, digitally delivered multidisciplinary rehabilitation service co-created by NHS clinical teams, Lancaster University, ELAROS 24/7 Ltd, SameYou and Health Innovation North West Coast (HINWC). A defining strength is the integrated clinical academic partnership between ELHT and Lancaster University, enabling evidence generation, co design and rapid translation of learning into practice.

NHS teams shaped clinical pathways and delivery models; ELAROS configured the Autonom e platform to support scalable digital operations; SameYou ensured co production and accessibility; Lancaster University led independent evaluation, health economics and sustainment research; and HINWC provided implementation coaching, PPIE facilitation and commissioning support. This combination allowed NROL to overcome barriers that no single organisation could solve alone.

By combining clinical expertise, digital technology, research and lived experience, NROL addresses inequalities

in access to community neurorehabilitation while increasing therapy intensity and improving patient outcomes. It has been successfully implemented and adapted across multiple regions and the service has demonstrated sustainable, scalable delivery through strong cross-sector collaboration and robust independent evaluation. Its' proven model, integrated clinical-academic partnership and co-produced approach position NROL for wider adoption and future national NHS commissioning.

“The judges were impressed by how this service clearly demonstrates what is possible when services work together across boundaries with patient engagement at the centre.”



FIND OUT MORE

[l.connell2@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:l.connell2@lancaster.ac.uk)

## HIGHLY COMMENDED



### Greater Manchester Pre-Hospital Point of Care Troponin Pilot

**Philip Jones**, Innovation Consultant, Advanced Practitioner and Paramedic, North West Ambulance Service

The project investigated the feasibility of Pre-hospital Point-of-Care Troponin Testing carried out by paramedics, which has the potential to improve cardiac pathways, patient outcomes, and NHS efficiency and reduce costs. The innovation was designed, implemented, and evaluated by a cross-organisational project team, including University of Manchester, Manchester University NHS FT, North West Ambulance and a medical device company as part of the Advanced Diagnostics Accelerator programme.

Contact: [phillip.jones2@nwas.nhs.uk](mailto:phillip.jones2@nwas.nhs.uk)

## FINALISTS



### The collaborative design and evaluation of a virtual tour of a Radiotherapy department

**Nicky Hutton**, Therapeutic Radiographer, The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre

This project collaboratively partnered with patient representatives via the Patient Inclusion and Engagement Group (PIEG), City of Liverpool College digital students, and wider stakeholders including Laing O'Rourke, University of Liverpool, CCCL and the North-West Radiotherapy ODN to design and evaluate a virtual tour of a Radiotherapy department to give patients essential information before their first hospital visit, supporting them to understand the department, navigation, processes and what to expect, helping patients feel more prepared and reducing the need for additional pre-visit appointments.

Contact: [nicky.hutton@nhs.net](mailto:nicky.hutton@nhs.net)



### The Julia Garnham Centre

**Duncan Baker**, Clinical Scientist (Genomics), Musculoskeletal and Respiratory Genomics Service Lead, Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust and **Adam Hodgson**, Senior Lecturer in Genomics, University of Sheffield

The Julia Garnham Centre (The University of Sheffield and Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust in Partnership) is an NHS badged healthcare genomics training and research-analysis facility. The partnership provides strategic re-evaluation of rare disease patients in England without a diagnosis whilst training the next generation of healthcare geneticists. This work has led to the diagnosis of specific rare diseases in patients from across England and has enhanced the employability of hundreds of students to healthcare genomics.

Contact: [duncan.baker@nhs.net](mailto:duncan.baker@nhs.net)

## Biomedical Scientist of the Year award

Sponsored by the Institute of Biomedical Science

# WINNER

### Angela Jean-Francois

Managing Director and Biomedical Scientist,  
North West London Pathology

Angela is an outstanding biomedical scientist and influential national leader whose work has transformed pathology services and strengthened the biomedical science profession across the UK. With more than 25 years' experience, she leads North West London Pathology, one of the country's largest integrated diagnostic networks, delivering high-quality diagnostic services across seven hospital sites and primary care. Under her strategic leadership, pathology services have been modernised and integrated, improving efficiency, resilience and turnaround times to ensure patients receive timely, reliable diagnostics.

Alongside her operational achievements, Angela has made sustained national

contributions through the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS), where she has supported specialist advisory work for over 20 years and currently helps shape the future of the profession through the IBMS Council and as Chair of the Education and Professional Standards Committee. A passionate advocate for biomedical science, she has strengthened education, training and workforce development, contributed to leading biomedical science textbooks, and actively mentors and inspires the next generation of professionals. Through her leadership, innovation and commitment to collaboration, Angela has improved diagnostic services, advanced professional standards and reinforced the vital role of biomedical scientists in delivering outstanding patient care.

“The judges thought that Angela is an exemplar of the profession, demonstrating strong leadership, innovation and skill, with an unwavering commitment to biomedical science.”



## FINALISTS



### Humaira Hussain

Biomedical Scientist, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Humaira demonstrates exceptional commitment to advancing biomedical science beyond traditional boundaries. She proactively put herself forward for a system-level (ICB) AMR Fellowship, undertaking formal public health training and applying population health principles within her role as a Healthcare Scientist. Stepping well outside her comfort zone, she led the “Draw the Line” initiative, using behavioural science to improve design interventions to improve diagnostic stewardship (blood culture pathway) and antimicrobial resistance practice. Through regional and multidisciplinary engagement her project continues to strengthen patient safety, elevate the Biomedical Scientist role, and demonstrate the profession's value within population health systems



### Luke Hughes

Pathology Subject Matter Expert Lead – Academy Development Manager, National Pathology Programme, NHS Wales Performance and Improvement

Luke has made an exceptional national contribution through his leadership of Pathology Academy Wales (PAW), creating a unified digital learning platform that strengthens training and workforce sustainability across NHS Wales. As Subject Matter Expert within the National Pathology Programme, he established governance structures, developed high quality educational content and addressed key workforce gaps. Luke has also led the development of an AI in Education policy and delivered AI CPD sessions, becoming a trusted point of contact for colleagues seeking guidance on emerging technologies. His achievements demonstrate vision, innovation and measurable impact on training quality, digital accessibility and national workforce development.

## Echocardiographer of the Year award

Sponsored by British Society of Echocardiography

# WINNER

### Dr. Dario Freitas

Lead Clinical Scientist for Adult Congenital Heart Disease,  
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Dario Freitas is an outstanding Clinical Scientist whose leadership, innovation and commitment to education have significantly advanced echocardiography practice and the profession across the UK. As lead for the Adult Congenital Heart Disease (ACHD) echocardiography service at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, he was instrumental in establishing a nationally recognised Clinical Scientist-led clinic, creating a pioneering model of care that has improved patient access, reduced waiting times and enhanced continuity of care. By integrating advanced imaging, clinical assessment and patient education into a single pathway, his work has demonstrated the value of scientist-led services and helped redefine the role of Clinical Scientists and cardiac physiologists in modern healthcare.

Alongside his clinical achievements, Dario has made substantial contributions to research, education and national professional leadership. His published work on the ACHD clinic has

influenced best practice, while his involvement with the British Society of Echocardiography through teaching, guideline development and committee work has helped shape standards and training across the profession. He is a dedicated mentor, supporting physiologists, scientists and doctors through accreditation and higher specialist training pathways, and his doctoral research developing AI-enabled echocardiography tools highlights his commitment to innovation.

“The judges thought that Dario combines humility with outstanding leadership and is helping to shape the future of echocardiography while inspiring and developing the next generation of clinical leaders.”

## HIGHLY COMMENDED



### Bex Parsons-Simmonds

Lead Critical Care Echo Specialist, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board

Since her appointment in 2022 Bex Parsons-Simmonds has led her Department to achieve BSE EQF for ITU accreditation, placing it among only six units nationally. She is BSE accredited in both TTE and TOE and was awarded Intensive Care Society Clinician of the Year 2023, recognising her outstanding contribution to patient care, education, and service development. Through her dedication, she has delivered a transformative impact, strengthening governance, improving access to high-quality echocardiography in critical care, and embedding echo education into daily practice.

## FINALIST



### Adam Langley

Chief Cardiac Physiologist, Mid & South Essex Hospitals Trust

Adam Langley has delivered a transformative improvement to the regional aortic stenosis pathway, reducing the time from echo to referral from 88 days to just 2 days. Along with the TAVI Cardiologists, he designed and implemented a physiologist led fast track system across four hospitals, established an asymptomatic severe AS PIFU clinic, and strengthened multidisciplinary collaboration. His work has directly improved patient safety and service efficiency and he is now involved in a two year prospective registry study involving additional UK hospitals, expanding the pathway's reach and generating national level evidence.



## The #RightToRehab award for innovation

Sponsored by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

# WINNER

### Persistent Pain Programme in Prison Healthcare

**Verity Gee**, Clinical Lead HiJ MSK Service, **Michelle Saunders**, Secondary Care Lead CATs and Diagnostics and **Paul New**, Regional Team Lead HiJ MSK service, Physiotherapist, Practice Plus Group

This innovative prison-based persistent pain programme provides a safe, physiotherapy-led, non-opioid approach to pain management for a highly disadvantaged population with limited access to rehabilitation services. Developed through collaboration between physiotherapy, medical, psychology and prison operational teams, it adapts proven community pain management principles to the secure environment, combining personalised exercise with accessible pain education to improve understanding, confidence and self-management while supporting safer prescribing.

The programme has demonstrated meaningful improvements in pain, function and quality of life across multiple prison sites, alongside increased physical activity and greater engagement with self-management. By overcoming barriers such as low health literacy, restricted access to healthcare and complex psychosocial needs, it helps reduce health inequalities and supports wider participation in

education, work and wellbeing activities within prison. Backed by robust evaluation and a standardised delivery model, the programme has strong potential for sustainable rollout across the prison estate.

“The judges commended this programme for its use of education and empowerment to improve health-related quality of life, physical activity, and health literacy while reducing anxiety and pain.”



FIND OUT MORE

[verity.gee@practiceplusgroup.com](mailto:verity.gee@practiceplusgroup.com)

## FINALISTS



### From Fragmentation to Function – The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Functional Neurology Specialist Pathway

**Louise Baker**, Multi-Professional Consultant Practitioner (Physiotherapist) – Neurorehabilitation, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and **Dr Tom Cox**, Consultant Neurologist, University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust

Across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, the team developed a coordinated community Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) pathway uniting AHPs, psychology and neurology across acute and community organisations. Without extra funding, the pathway delivers earlier education, specialist advice and clinician support, improving consistency, patient understanding and equitable access closer to home. The model recognises that FND is widespread and best managed through coordinated, system wide working, so existing services can meet patients' needs efficiently.

Contact: [louise.baker3@nhs.net](mailto:louise.baker3@nhs.net)



### Creative and Innovative Practice in Neurorehabilitation: Embedding Dramatherapy to Support Psychological Recovery After Brain Injury

**Daniel Thomas**, Managing Director and Music Therapist, **Sarah Morris**, Dramatherapist, and **Sally Watson**, Healthcare Accounts Manager, Chroma and **James Lea**, Head of Therapies and **Merrilee Briggs**, Director of Care, British Home

This team demonstrated that strong AHP leadership can enable success. They embedded dramatherapy within a level 2a neurorehabilitation service supporting adults with acquired brain injury, with 84 individual sessions achieving 100% attendance, alongside group sessions averaging 11 residents. The team saw improved psychological wellbeing, confidence and social connection in residents, and increased engagement with physiotherapy, speech and language therapy and nursing services. The service improved access to psychological support within rehabilitation, reduced fragmentation-of-care, and ensured patients could engage in holistic, goal-focused interventions within existing care settings, bringing the right care closer to where they live.

Contact: [d.thomas@thechromagroup.com](mailto:d.thomas@thechromagroup.com)

# The award for outstanding achievement by an apprentice, support worker or non-registered technician in an AHP or healthcare science service

## WINNER

### Diane March

Dietetic Assistant, Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Diane has transformed nutritional care across adult wards by developing and leading a Trust-wide network of 54 Nutrition Champions. Recognising variation in ward-based nutritional practice, she introduced flexible, practical MUST training tailored to the realities of shift-based working, enabling both registered and unregistered staff to improve their confidence in nutritional screening, intervention and mealtime support.

Building on the success of this training, Diane established the Nutrition Champion programme, recruiting, training and mentoring Champions across all adult wards. Through competency frameworks, structured learning and regular forums to share best practice, she has empowered staff to drive improvements in nutrition, hydration and documentation within their own clinical areas.

Diane has also supported wider Trust initiatives, including increasing uptake of MUST eLearning, contributing to the relaunch of the Red Tray initiative and working collaboratively with Clinical

Education, nursing teams and catering services. Her practical leadership and commitment to patient-centred care have strengthened nutritional practice across the organisation, improving patient recovery, experience and the overall quality of care.

“The judges thought that Diane demonstrates how leadership can flourish at any level, championing her profession through commitment, initiative and influence, bringing mentorship, knowledge and empowerment to those around her, showing how individual action can drive meaningful change for patients.”

## FINALISTS



### Catherine Woodmore

Dietetic and Speech and Language Therapy Assistant Practitioner, Vale Community Resource Service, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board

Through a strong presence in care homes, Catherine has built trusted relationships, tailored training to staff needs and improved confidence in recognising and managing nutrition and swallowing concerns. This has supported earlier intervention, strengthened multidisciplinary working and improved outcomes for residents.



### Carla Yarra

Apprentice Audiologist, Great Western Hospitals Foundation Trust

Since beginning her Level 4 apprenticeship, Carla has consistently demonstrated an exceptional commitment to delivering high quality, empathetic audiology care, bringing a compassionate, patient centred approach. Alongside delivering high quality audiology care, she now has a new role of Dementia Champion, strengthening support for vulnerable patients.



# THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR JUDGES

## **Alan Deacon**

National Pathology Programme Lead  
National Pathology Programme  
NHS Wales Performance and Improvement

## **Alison Geddis**

Former President of IBMS (NI Branch)

## **Alison Keys**

AHP Lead for Workforce, Education and Regulation in  
the Department of Health, Northern Ireland

## **Andrew Langford**

Chief Executive, British Association of Music Therapists

## **Angela Douglas MBE**

President, BIVDA

## **Bamidele Farinre**

Chartered Biomedical Scientist

## **Caroline Stackhouse**

Associate Chief AHP, Milton Keynes University Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

## **Catherine Frances Townsend**

Clinical Scientist, Oxford University  
Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

## **Daniel Thomas**

Managing Director, Chroma

## **Divine Azange**

National Pathology Transformation Implementation  
Lead, Association for Laboratory Medicine

## **Gemma Hawtin**

Rehabilitation Assistant, Nicole Lavin Neuro Rehab

## **Grahame Pope**

Healthcare educator

## **Helen Moores-Poole**

Professional Adviser: Allied Health Professions,  
Scottish Government

## **Jenny Kirkwood**

Allied Health Professions Lead - Reform and Innovation,  
Department of Health Northern Ireland

## **Julie Bury**

Senior Programme Manager - AHPs, NIHR

## **June F Davis**

Lead Nursing and AHP Advisor, Macmillan Cancer  
Support

## **Karen Brazier**

Professional Healthcare Science Advisor,  
Scottish Government

## **Kim Bowles**

Head of Professional Engagement,  
Macmillan Cancer Support

## **Kirsty Gordon**

Consultant Clinical Scientist, Hampshire Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

## **Lisa Ledger**

Assistant Director of Allied Health Professions, NIHR

## **Lynda Rigby**

Executive Head of Marketing and Membership, IBMS

## **Mark Bradley**

Head of Rehabilitation Care and Support,  
Welsh Government

## **Nicky Eddison**

Chair, British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists

## **Peter Liu**

Head of Scientific Programmes, NHS England

## **Rachael Wadlow**

Physiotherapist and Professional Advisor, CSP

## **Ruth Crowder**

Former Chief AHP Adviser for Welsh Government

## **Ruth ten Hove**

Assistant Director (Practice and Development  
Department), Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

## **Ruth Thomsen**

Head of Healthcare Science, NHSE London

## **Sarah Pitt**

President, IBMS

## **Steve Jamieson**

Chief Executive,  
Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

## **Suzanne Avington**

Associate Director Allied Health Professionals,  
Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

## **Thomas Howson**

Innovation Lead, Bevan Commission

## **Venus Madden**

Associate Director of Allied Health Professionals  
Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

## **Vicki Heath**

Chief Healthcare Science Officer, Welsh Government

## **Victoria Chalker**

Deputy Chief Scientific Officer, NHS England