NORTHERN IRELAND
ADVANCING HEALTHCARE AWARDS 2026

WINNERS' GUIDE

ADVANCING HEALTHCARE AWARDS NORTHERN IRELAND 2026

Celebrating the winning entries,
presented on Thursday 22 October 2026
La Mon Hotel & Country Club, Belfast

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

NORTHERN IRELAND
ADVANCING HEALTHCARE AWARDS 2026

Congratulations to all our winners and finalists

Welcome to the work of the finalists of the 2026 Advancing Healthcare awards Northern Ireland for allied health professionals and healthcare scientists.

The Advancing Healthcare Awards Northern Ireland ceremony was held in Belfast at the La Mon Hotel and Country Club on Thursday 22 October 2026.

We were delighted with the number of high-quality entries we received this year which is testament to the dedication and creativity of AHPs and healthcare scientists in Northern Ireland.

A special thank you to our sponsors and supporters who not only provided financial support but helped us with the huge task of judging. These organisations are:

Our award category sponsors:

- Unite the Union, NI Health Branch
- Ulster University
- HCS Clinical Education Centre, Business Services Organisation
- Institute of Biomedical Science
- Macmillan Cancer Support
- HSC Leadership Centre, Business Services Organisation

Our special supporters:

- Allied Health Professions Federation Northern Ireland
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Northern Ireland
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists Northern Ireland
- British Dietetic Association Northern Ireland Board

This Winners' Guide summarises the work of the finalists and gives contact details. Thank you to everyone who helped to make the 2026 Northern Ireland Awards so successful.

Will Chamberlain-Webber

Managing director, Chamberlain Dunn
October 2026

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 in Northern Ireland in 2026 than an awards ceremony can ever achieve
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** or call **020 8334 4500**

OVERALL WINNER



Falls Prevention Deserves Your Attention – BHSCT Falls Prevention Roadshow

Joy Cooper, Community Falls Team Lead (Interim), and **the Community Falls Prevention and Management Service**, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

> *…The scalability, flexibility, and reach of this kind of innovative partnership approach to addressing preventative healthcare outcomes is significant.*

See next page for more details

Award for creative and innovative practice

WINNER & OVERALL WINNER

Falls Prevention Deserves Your Attention – BHSCT Falls Prevention Roadshow

Joy Cooper, Community Falls Team Lead (Interim), and **the Community Falls Prevention and Management Service**, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

This multi-agency roadshow brings practical falls prevention advice and access to specialist services into community settings, including IKEA Belfast. Developed with service users, it brings health professionals, emergency services and voluntary organisations together to help people understand falls risks and access preventive support.

- Four events reached more than 400 people from May 2025, extending access to falls prevention information beyond clinical settings.
- 75% of evaluation respondents reported a significant increase in knowledge; feedback also described greater confidence and understanding of prevention strategies.
- 94% of respondents rated the event very good or excellent, and 100% said they would recommend it.

CONTACT: maire.kerr@belfasttrust.hscni.net



HIGHLY COMMENDED



Seeing Through Their Eyes: An Inclusive, Sensory-Aware EEG Experience

Grace McCue *and* ***Bronagh Woods****, Clinical Physiologists,* ***Stacy McAvoy****, Administrator, and* ***the Neurophysiology team****, Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children*

The team created a child-focused video showing the hospital journey and EEG procedure, particularly for children with learning disabilities, neurodivergent needs or sensory sensitivities. Accessible through appointment QR codes and translated into five commonly requested languages, it is complemented by an immersive simulation for children needing additional preparation.

grace.mccue@belfasttrust.hscni.net

FINALISTS



Transforming Care Through a Person-Centred Frequent Service User Framework

Claire Hallowell*, Complex Case Manager and* ***the team*** *at Northern Ireland Ambulance Service*

NIAS introduced a structured, trauma-informed framework to support people who frequently use emergency ambulance services. Early identification, personalised interventions and multi-agency care planning address underlying unmet needs, helping people access appropriate support while reducing avoidable emergency demand.

claire.hallowell@nias.hscni.net



A Walk to Remember: the Pilot of a Simulation-Based-Education Session on the Topic of Frailty

Anne-Marie Stewart *and* ***Debbie McVeigh****, Occupational Therapists (Belfast Health and Social Care Trust) and the Management, Staff, and Residents of Lansdowne Care Home (Belfast)*

Working in partnership with six care home residents living with frailty, this simulation programme helps staff experience the challenges residents face in daily life. Led on site by occupational therapists, supported by multidisciplinary colleagues, it uses practical activities and reflective discussion to build understanding and support more compassionate, personalised care.

annemarie.stewart@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Award for service improvement

Sponsored by the HSC Clinical Education Centre, Business Services Organisation

HSC Clinical Education Centre
Business Services Organisation

AHP WINNER

Person-Centered Care for (Musculoskeletal) MSK Services through Community Appointment Days

Eilis McGarvey, Musculoskeletal Lead Physiotherapist, Nikki Scott and Reuben McIlrath, Clinical Team Leads and Temporary Project Leads, and Allie Cameron, Principal Physiotherapist, MSK Services, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Community Appointment Days bring personalised physiotherapy assessment, specialist advice and community support together in one setting. Designed around patient priorities for mobility and self-management, the model offers tailored care and follow-up while connecting people with local services that support their wider health and wellbeing.

- Average referral-to-treatment time fell by 15 weeks, helping patients access care sooner.
- 1,188 patients were managed across seven appointment days from January 2026; new patient activity increased by 15% over six months.
- 99% of patients reported high satisfaction and 97% felt better supported to understand their condition.

CONTACT: eilis.mcgarvey@setrust.hscni.net



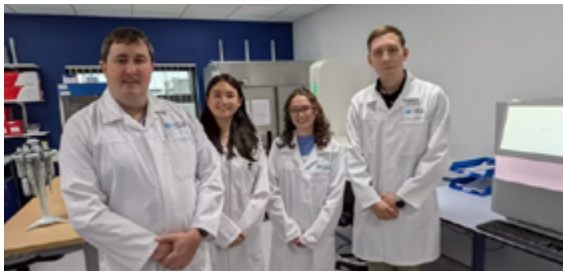
HEALTHCARE SCIENCE WINNER

New Pharmacogenomic (PGx) testing service, Precision Diagnostic Laboratory

Mark Watson, Scientific Lab Manager and the Precision Diagnostic Laboratory Team, Western Health and Social Care Trust

The team established a new Precision Diagnostic Laboratory within the WHSCT, delivering the first UKAS-accredited pharmacogenomics (PGx) panel test in the UK or Ireland. This enables safer personalised prescribing for patients across HSCNI, reducing adverse drug reactions and improving treatment effectiveness whilst reducing the economic burden of unnecessary/ineffective prescriptions.

- Established a UKAS-accredited pharmacogenomics panel service, described in the entry as the first in the UK or Ireland, creating validated regional testing capability.
- The service reports faster turnaround times and reduced reliance on external laboratories through local delivery, improving access to testing that informs personalised prescribing.
- Directly benefits patients by enabling safer, more effective prescribing based on an individual's genetic profile rather than trial-and-error prescribing methods.



CONTACT: mark.watson@westerntrust.hscni.net

FINALISTS

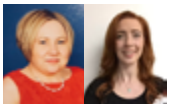
Advanced Paramedic Critical Care Rapid Response Vehicle



***Glenn O'Rorke**, Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) Lead Paramedic and **the Advanced Paramedic Critical Care team**, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service*

NIAS developed advanced paramedic roles to deliver specialist assessment and critical care interventions before patients reach hospital. Working through rapid response vehicles and the helicopter emergency medical service, the team provides advanced treatments such as procedural sedation and cardiac arrest management, alongside clinical support for ambulance crews.

glenn.ororke@nias.hscni.net



Food first approach for care home residents with dysphagia: Impacts on service users, costs and environment

***Fiona Hillen**, Clinical Specialist Dysphagia Dietitian and **Elizabeth McKnight**, Head of Nutrition and Dietetics, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust*

Dietitians and speech and language therapists worked in collaboration with care home residents, care and catering staff, to promote homemade nutrient dense options for residents with dysphagia. The food first approach reached 339 residents in 53 homes, expanding choice and reducing or stopping prescribed oral nutritional supplements for 79% of participants.

fiona.hillen@setrust.hscni.net

Sleep talking on Facebook: Enhancing support for CPAP patients by building an amazing online community



***Niall Hugh Totten**, Senior Chief Sleep Healthcare Scientist, **Clare McMahon**, Chief Sleep Healthcare Scientist, **Shona O'Hara** and **Lauren Hawthorne**, Sleep Healthcare Scientists, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*

Belfast Trust's Sleep Service created a private, moderated Facebook group to support people using continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) treatment. The community, now approaching 900 members, combines patient peer support with staff oversight to improve understanding, resolve treatment difficulties and help patients manage care at home.

niall.totten@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Award for excellence in cancer care

Sponsored by Macmillan Cancer Support

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

WINNER

Anal Cancer Awareness Day Pilot Project

Naman Julka-Anderson, Macmillan Consultant Therapeutic Radiographer, AHP Clinical Advisor, Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust and Rad Chat Co-Founder, **Dr Catherine Hanna**, Consultant Clinical Oncologist, Queens University Belfast and **the multi-professional Anal Cancer Awareness Day Pilot Project Team**

The UK's first Anal Cancer Awareness Day brought patients, carers, clinicians and charities together in Northern Ireland to address stigma, improve awareness and co-produce better care. Co-produced around stakeholder priorities, the pilot combined clinical education with lived experience and informed plans for peer support and future services.

- Patients reported reduced isolation and a stronger sense of community, including meeting someone else with anal cancer for the first time and feeling their experiences were normalised.
- Professional feedback reported improved awareness and confidence, with attendees describing the information as useful for developing future practice.

> *"…This project's greatest strength was its exceptional co-production with patients and its success in breaking down stigma surrounding anal cancer"*

CONTACT: njulkaanderson@macmillan.org.uk



FINALISTS



From Waiting to Preparing: Transforming the Start of the Cancer Journey

Kar-Lee Brown**, Consultant Therapeutic Radiographer for Head & Neck Cancer, **Claire Duffy**, Clinical Nurse Specialist for Head & Neck Cancer, and **the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Head & Neck Cancer Multiprofessional Team

This head and neck cancer prehabilitation clinic uses the period between consent and radiotherapy to prepare patients for treatment. It brings radiography, cancer nursing, dietetics and speech and language therapy together in one coordinated appointment, addressing questions and identifying support needs before treatment begins.

karlee.brown@belfasttrust.hscni.net



Radiotherapy Physics Stereotactic Ablative Radiotherapy Service

***Karen Bradley,** Principal Dosimetrist, North West Cancer Centre, Western Health and Social Care Trust*

North West Cancer Centre established its first lung stereotactic ablative radiotherapy (SABR) service, bringing highly specialised, potentially curative treatment closer to patients in the North West and Donegal. Through extensive multidisciplinary collaboration across organisational boundaries and partnership working with colleagues at Northern Ireland Cancer Centre the service improves equity of access, reduces travel burdens, enhances patient experience and relieves capacity pressures on NICC.

karene.bradley@westerntrust.hscni.net

Award for Masters clinical research

Sponsored by the School of Health Sciences, Ulster University

WINNER

Safety and Outcomes of Biennial Diabetes Foot Screening in Low-Risk Adults: A Retrospective Cohort Analysis

Claire Byrne, Principal Podiatrist, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust

Diabetes foot disease is a major cause of morbidity and remains the leading cause of non-traumatic lower-limb amputation worldwide. Routine foot screening plays a key role in identifying risk factors, preventing ulceration, and reducing diabetes related complications. However, despite widespread implementation of annual screening, evidence defining the optimal screening interval for people stratified as low risk remains limited. People at low risk represent a substantial proportion of the diabetes population and have a very low likelihood of developing foot ulceration. At the same time, increasing diabetes prevalence, rising service demand, and workforce pressures are creating significant challenges for NHS podiatry services. Identifying safe, evidence-based approaches to risk-stratified screening could improve patient experience, optimise clinical capacity, and support sustainable service delivery. This study evaluated the outcomes of a two-year screening interval for people initially stratified as low risk within a large NHS podiatry service.



CONTACT: claire_byrne@live.co.uk

WINNER

'DECISION' An ethical decision making framework for AHPs in NI

Bernie McGreevy, Community Palliative Care Lead, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

'DECISION' is an ethical decision-making framework for Allied Health Professionals developed in Northern Ireland to strengthen consistent, person-centred practice in complex contexts. Co-produced with AHPs, service users and academics, and motivated by AHPs being seen as 'risk averse' and professionals facing increasing moral distress, the purpose of this piece of work is to provide an ethical framework to assist AHPs in decision making whilst navigating complex ethical situations within their roles. This development has been achieved through a review of relevant literature as well as actively engaging with the views and experiences of AHPs throughout this process. It has been developed through widespread consultation with AHPs, PPI, Regulators and AHP leaders from across all sectors.



CONTACT: bernie.mcgreevy@setrust.hscni.net

FINALISTS

Decision-Making Styles of Student Paramedics: Associations with Protocol Reliance and Confidence in Independent Clinical Judgement



***Sean Graham**, EPRR Training Officer, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service*

Clinical decision-making is central to safe and effective paramedic practice. As paramedics increasingly manage complex patient presentations with greater autonomy, understanding factors which influence clinical decision-making, particularly during undergraduate education and transition to professional practice, becomes increasingly important. Despite increasing interest in paramedic decision-making, limited UK research has examined student paramedic decision-making styles, and how they relate to protocol reliance or confidence in independent decision-making. This study aimed to address this gap by examining decision-making styles among UK student paramedics and their associations with protocol reliance and confidence in independent clinical decision-making. In so doing, it seeks to assist educators in supporting the transition of paramedic students into effective, safe and autonomous decision-makers.

sean.graham@nias.hscni.net



Making Every Contact Count: From First Contact to Lasting Change in Physiotherapy

***Ronan O'Kane**, Principal Physiotherapist MSK SS & Pelvic Health Trustwide, Western Health & Social Care Trust and Professor Chris Bleakley, Ulster University*

Health promotion is a core capability of the First Contact Physiotherapist (FCP) role, yet there is limited evidence evaluating its implementation within primary care in Northern Ireland. This independent research project addresses this gap by exploring FCPs' knowledge of national health promotion guidelines and the extent to which they translate this knowledge into clinical practice. Given the established link between unhealthy behaviours and reduced life expectancy, embedding effective brief interventions within routine musculoskeletal consultations offers significant opportunity to improve patient outcomes and reduce long-term healthcare burden.

ronan.okane@westerntrust.hscni.net

Award for outstanding service delivery by an AHP or healthcare scientist working outside the NHS

WINNER

Threshold's ARBI Unit- Leading the Way for ARBI Rehabilitation in Northern Ireland

Naomi Brown, Clinical Lead, Threshold

Threshold's specialist residential unit provides occupational therapy-led rehabilitation for adults with alcohol-related brain injury (ARBI), combining cognitive rehabilitation with addiction support. Meaningful activities, structured routines and individual goals help residents rebuild practical skills, maintain abstinence and work towards community living.

- 57% of discharges returned to community living, despite all residents being admitted from hospital or care home settings.
- Cognitive assessment results improved: ACE-III scores increased by an average of seven points and RBANS scores by 9.5%.
- 80% of residents maintained abstinence, alongside individual achievements such as rebuilding family relationships, volunteering and travelling independently.

> *"…An exceptional programme delivering much needed care for those with ARBI."*

CONTACT: naomi.brown@threshold-services.co.uk



FINALISTS



Post Rehab Exercise Programme (PREP)

***Ursula Ferguson**, Director of Care, **Noelene Hughes**, Head of Stroke Services, and **the PREP team**, Northern Ireland Chest Heart Stroke*

PREP is a physiotherapy-led community programme supporting stroke survivors after statutory rehabilitation ends. Available across all five Northern Ireland Health Trusts, it combines individually adapted group exercise, education and peer support to improve physical recovery and help people return to everyday life.

uferguson@nichs.org.uk



Children's Movement Clinic

***Claire Dobie, Keelan Murphy and Lynda Croskery**, Podiatrists, Foot Clinic NI and **Julie Edler**, Specialised Paediatric Physiotherapist, Movement and Milestones*

Foot Clinic NI's Children's Movement Clinic provides joint assessment by a paediatric physiotherapist and podiatrist for children and teenagers with movement or musculoskeletal difficulties. Its family-centred private practice model combines movement analysis, personalised therapy and communication with education and other services to provide timely, coordinated support.

info@footclinicni.com

Award for outstanding leadership

Sponsored by the Institute of Biomedical Science

AHP
WINNER



Transformational Regional Leadership Driving Outstanding Improvement in Podiatry Services and Diabetes Care Across Northern Ireland

Denise Killough, Professional Head of Podiatry Services, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Denise Killough is an exceptional clinical leader whose vision transformed podiatry and diabetes care across Northern Ireland. Through regional pathways, standardised high-risk foot care, insulin pump implementation, workforce development and strategic investment, she improved equity, reduced amputations, modernised services and created a lasting legacy of safer, outstanding, truly patient-centred care.

Achievements include

- Implemented the regional diabetic foot pathway, four-tier care model and shared risk assessment tools, enabling earlier identification of high-risk patients and contributing to lower amputation rates.
- Led the regional introduction and standardisation of insulin pump services, securing revenue and capital investment to modernise diabetes care and improve patients' quality of life.

HEALTHCARE SCIENCE
WINNER



Advancing Radiotherapy Care Through Leadership and Workforce Transformation

Karen Bradley, Principal Dosimetrist, North West Cancer Centre, Western Health and Social Care Trust

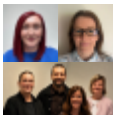
Karen Bradley has dedicated more than two decades to improving cancer care. Her contributions span local service development, regional cancer care transformation and national professional leadership. She has led workforce transformation initiatives, influenced professional standards, championed statutory registration for Clinical Technologists while developing national advanced and consultant practice pathways.

Achievements include

- Key contributor to implementation and commissioning of 2 cancer centres in NI including the establishment of a cancer centre for the NW of Ireland.
- Led two national radiotherapy healthcare scientist workforce surveys, providing evidence that informed workforce planning discussions and highlighted career development and succession needs.
- Through leadership roles within IPEM, the RCT & national working groups she has helped shape shape national education and professional standards and develop advanced and consultant practice frameworks for healthcare scientists.

FINALISTS

From Exclusion to Employment: leading mental health recovery



***Ellen Malcolm**, Occupational Therapy Manager Mental Health and CAMHS, **Donna McElduff**, Specialist Occupational Therapist, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and **the team** at Action Mental Health*

The Individual Placement Support team made employment a core part of recovery for people with severe mental illness. Working with Action Mental Health, it embedded employment specialists within clinical teams and offered personalised, ongoing support to help people find work aligned with their goals.

Circle of safety: Seamless traceability of reprocessed medical devices

***Brian Boyd**, Head of Decontamination Services and Healthcare Scientist, and **the team**, Northern Health and Social Care Trust*



Brian Boyd led the integration of medical device tracking with Encompass patient records to create digital traceability from decontamination to patient use. Through the introduction of microdot technology, alongside existing barcode systems, every instrument now has a unique digital identity, connecting individual instruments and device packs to the people treated with them, strengthening audit and recall processes. Initially implemented in surgical, endoscopy, and dental services, this is now expanding across all instrumentation and will roll out regionally.

Healing the Healers



***Diane Keys**, Occupational Therapist Advanced Practitioner Level 2, and **Rebecca Hughes**, Band 6 Occupational Therapist, and **the Post-Covid team** within Occupational Health, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Blossoms at Larne Lough and NHS Charities Together*

Brian Boyd led the integration of medical device Diane Keys and team led and developed an occupational therapy-led rehabilitation service for healthcare staff with Long Covid and complex long-term conditions. Evolving from an advice line, it combines detailed functional assessment, personalised rehabilitation and multidisciplinary follow-up to support recovery and safe participation in work, strengthening workforce capacity, reducing risk, and improving safe, consistent care delivery across services.

An Inspiring Lifetime Commitment to Excellence in Neurophysiology



***Brenda McManus**, Chartered Scientist, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*

Brian Boyd led the integration of medical device Brenda is an accomplished neurophysiology leader who has driven innovation, governance and clinical excellence across multiple services, transforming provision from basic diagnostics to advanced regional care. By establishing polysomnography services, strengthening governance frameworks, supporting the profession's transition to graduate training, and maintaining hands-on clinical expertise, she has significantly improved safety, access, and outcomes for complex adult and paediatric patients.

Rising Stars



Coral Trainor

Respiratory Healthcare Scientist,
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Coral combines respiratory clinical practice with active promotion of healthcare science across Northern Ireland. She contributes to quality improvement and professional working groups, volunteers at schools and careers fairs, and supports students, with colleagues and patients recognising her dedication, enthusiasm and professionalism.



Melissa Patterson

Occupational Therapy Assistant,
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Melissa supports patients and colleagues in the Meadowlands Rehabilitation Unit at Musgrave Park Hospital. Her nomination highlights compassionate care, clear communication and dependable organisation, helping patients feel reassured during rehabilitation while supporting the smooth running of the occupational therapy department.



Ellie Robinson

Orthoptist,
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Ellie has made a strong contribution to the orthoptic service within her first year of qualification. She has developed confidence and independence in clinical practice, adapted quickly to Encompass and sought feedback, while contributing ideas for clinic efficiency and providing clear, reassuring patient communication.



Oonagh McManus

Speech and Language Therapist,
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Oonagh has developed from a newly qualified therapist into a confident practitioner in the Voice and Throat team. She leads health promotion and education activities, collaborates with professional partners and uses social media creatively to raise awareness, alongside sensitive, reflective therapy that patients respond to positively.



Oran Wilson

Band 6 Specialist Physiotherapist,
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Oran led a change in the Regional Intensive Care Unit to enable patients receiving renal replacement therapy to mobilise rather than remain on prolonged bedrest. He researched safe practice, developed a standard operating procedure and worked with consultants, lead nurses and the wider team to introduce the change.



Ciaran McCarroll

Healthcare Science Assistant,
Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Ciaran has developed the Trust's first healthcare science assistant role of its kind into an increasingly independent contribution to respiratory physiology. He combines spirometry training with practical improvements to patient information and diagnostic organisation, taking ownership of changes that support the service and patient experience.



Jakob McComb

Band 5 Physiotherapist,
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Jakob applies strong musculoskeletal knowledge and a strength and conditioning background to specialist rheumatology care. His nomination highlights thoughtful clinical reasoning, personalised rehabilitation and effective teamwork, alongside resilience in managing increased demands during staff shortages and an approachable manner that supports patient engagement.

Outstanding undergraduate of the year

Sponsored by the School of Health Sciences, Ulster University

Each student who achieved the highest overall mark within their programme was invited to submit a brief reflective statement on how they had developed both personally and professionally throughout their studies, and their future aspirations as a qualified practitioner within their chosen profession. Following review of the submissions, three students were shortlisted for the Undergraduate Award – UU Outstanding Graduate of the Year.

WINNER

Claire McGoldrick

Physiotherapy Graduate, Ulster University

Claire's reflection described a transformative journey from an eager but uncertain student to a confident and reflective physiotherapist. Through academic study, clinical placements and personal experiences, Claire gained a deeper understanding of the profession, recognising that physiotherapy extends beyond clinical knowledge to include trust, communication, teamwork and compassion. Patients, mentors, peers and family all played a vital role in shaping Claire's development and resilience. For Claire, the experience highlighted the importance of collaboration, adaptability and lifelong learning in healthcare. Ultimately, Claire graduates not only with a qualification, but with a clear understanding of what it means to be a physiotherapist.



FINALISTS

Caitlin McElroy



Diagnostic Radiography Graduate, Ulster University

Caitlin reflected on how studying Diagnostic Radiography has fostered not only clinical knowledge and technical skills, but also personal growth in confidence, resilience and professionalism. Through academic learning and clinical placements, Caitlin developed a deep appreciation for teamwork, multidisciplinary collaboration and the vital role each healthcare professional plays in patient care. A key lesson learned for Caitlin was that empathy is a professional strength, enabling more compassionate, patient-centred care. Looking ahead, Caitlin is committed to lifelong learning, with aspirations to specialise in ultrasound and support the development of future student radiographers. Ultimately, the journey has shaped a reflective, compassionate and capable practitioner dedicated to making a positive impact on patients and the profession.

Sophie Martin



Occupational Therapy Graduate, Ulster University

Sophie's submission outlined a journey of significant personal and professional growth throughout an Occupational Therapy degree. Sophie developed a strong commitment to holistic, person-centred practice, while balancing the challenges of becoming a mother and completing her studies, demonstrating remarkable resilience and determination. Diverse placement experiences enhanced her clinical reasoning, communication skills and understanding of mental health, acute care, community practice and family support. These experiences strengthened Sophie's empathy and reinforced the importance of seeing the person beyond their diagnosis. As a newly qualified occupational therapist, Sophie is committed to lifelong learning and supporting individuals to participate in meaningful everyday occupations.

Outstanding paramedic science undergraduate of the year

Sponsored by the School of Nursing and Paramedic Science, Ulster University

WINNER



Andrew Fitzsimons

Year 3 Paramedic Student, Ulster University

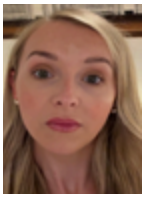
Andrew is an Ulster University paramedic science graduand whose work across several teams has attracted consistently positive feedback. Colleagues highlight his kindness, professionalism, communication and compassionate person-centred care, alongside strong clinical ability and a positive, supportive approach to teamwork as setting an exemplary standard for future students.

FINALIST

Lyndsay Tosh

Year 3 Paramedic Student, Ulster University

Lyndsay is an Ulster University paramedic science graduand recognised for exceptional standards during practice-based learning with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service. Her nomination highlights integrity, compassion and reflective ability, with a strong commitment to person-centred care.



She is recognised as an excellent ambassador for the university and the ambulance service.

Award nominated by a patient or service user

WINNER

Ann Mellon

OT, Western Health and Social Care Trust

Ann saw a real gap in opportunities for adults with severe learning disabilities and did something about it. Through determination, compassion and innovation, she helped create an inclusive cycling opportunity that gives people the chance to exercise, experience greater independence and participate alongside their families in their own community.

For adults with severe learning disabilities, opportunities to exercise independently and participate in activities that many of us take for granted can be extremely limited. This project has changed that. It has provided a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment at Omagh Leisure Centre where individuals can exercise, enjoy cycling and participate alongside their parents, carers and staff.



The family member who nominated Ann said

"we have seen genuine benefits to his overall health and wellbeing. Just as importantly, it gives him an activity that is his to enjoy – an opportunity to be active, experience greater independence and be included within his local community. The impact also extends to families. Seeing someone you care for being given an opportunity that previously did not exist is incredibly rewarding.

Ann did not simply identify a gap in provision; she helped create a practical solution. The recognition the Inclusive Bikes project has already received is thoroughly deserved, but for families like ours, the improvement in quality of life is the real measure of its success."

The Patricia Blackburn award for Significant Contribution and Achievement

Sponsored by HSC Leadership Centre

WINNER

Elizabeth McKnight

Head of Nutrition & Dietetics, South Eastern Trust



Elizabeth McKnight has dedicated over three decades to advancing dietetic practice. A former BDA NI Branch and Board Chair and recipient of the prestigious IBEX award, she has led transformation in services, governance, and workforce development, delivering measurable and sustained improvements in patient care.

Elizabeth has delivered transformative, system-wide impact on services and patient care across Northern Ireland through exceptional leadership, innovation, and sustained commitment to excellence. Her early clinical leadership in renal and cardiology improved outcomes for patients with complex conditions and achieved national recognition through the BDA IBEX award.

As Head of SET Nutrition & Dietetics, she has redefined service delivery, embedding dietitians within multidisciplinary pathways and positioning nutrition at the centre of prevention and treatment. She has led modern, evidence-based models, including rapid-access ambulatory services, digital and community interventions, and innovative gastro hub pathways, now embedded as sustainable, system-wide practice. These have delivered measurable improvements in waiting times, patient self-management, and hospital avoidance.

Her influence extends far beyond SET through regional leadership, including Encompass, historic AHPFNI & BDA chair roles, shaping standards, policy, and the future direction of Dietetics. During COVID-19, she was recognised on the BDA Roll of Honour as a Community Hero.

Elizabeth's legacy is one of transformational leadership and sustained system improvement. She has developed a strong leadership pipeline, ensuring continued innovation, resilience, and progression across the profession. Her influence on governance, digital transformation, service design, and public health policy has shaped the future direction of dietetics across Northern Ireland.

> *"…Elizabeth's work has delivered lasting system-wide improvement – leaving a legacy of better, more accessible, equitable, and higher-quality care."*

Thank you to all of our judges

Eileen Dolan
Fiona McCallion
Jenny Kirkwood
Martina Burns
Professor Chris Hopkins
Jacqueline Stinson
Joanne Shannon
Dr Sarah Pitt
Deirdre Winters
Noel Black
Rachel Loughins

Charlotte-Anne Wells
Kerry Hudson
Paul Corns
Emma-Jane SImpson
Joanne McCarthy
Dr John Cathcart
Emma Dunn
Alison Keys
Claire Taylor
Mary Costelloe
Denise Nixon

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