

Oxford trust's first support worker conference hailed a rousing success

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The Support Worker Academy at the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust held its first ever conference for clinical support staff. Entitled 'Giving Something Back', the conference was attended by approximately 80 clinical support staff from across the therapy, nursing and social care disciplines.

What was headlined as, and was indeed, a very packed and informative day launched with an opening speech from Samantha Donohue, the academy's lead. There were a number of speakers from both within and outside the trust, including Tanis Hand, the RCN HCA adviser, who gave the keynote address, focusing very much on the importance and value of the support worker workforce in the care of patients. Tanis also spoke about the national debate around healthcare assistants and their title, which also formed part of the table discussion later in the day.

There wasn't a dry eye in the conference hall when mum and service user Jan Sunman shared her experiences of supporting two children with a learning disability and how healthcare professionals had supported her and her family. While most of Jan's experiences with the NHS were positive, it was clear that we still do not have it completely right and not surprisingly the need for us to listen more to our patients and their families and carers is key.

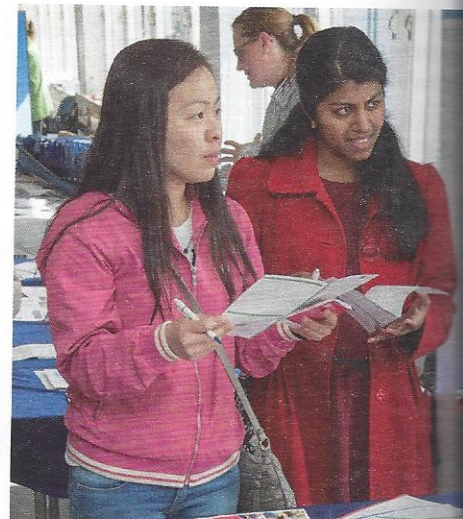
The *British Journal of Healthcare Assistants'* very own Peter Bradley followed Jan with a humorous but thought-provoking session titled 'Hearing your voice'. This was about empowering healthcare support staff

to have a voice, with a real emphasis on recognising that their voice is important in the care of their patients.

Career opportunities were highlighted by Marion Holden, who was part of the first cohort of assistant practitioners in the trust. She offered an insight to the difference the role of the assistant practitioner had made to her, patients and the clinical area as a whole. Ron Lyder then spoke of his journey from a healthcare assistant to his current role as a senior staff nurse. Ron's talk was followed by the academy's first ever award ceremony, which had three categories:

- 'A clinical support worker or assistant practitioner who has demonstrated excellence in care'—this category was won by Paul Nuique, who was nominated by his ward sister Karen Fenn. Runner-up in this category was Marion Holden, who was nominated by Lorraine Whatley, a staff nurse colleague.
- 'A colleague that has made a difference to your learning and development'—this category was won by Stuart Jackson, who was nominated by fellow CSW colleague Jennifer Neely and runner-up was Theresa Joseph (staff nurse), who was nominated by CSW Jackie Bagshaw.

"Giving something back' to our support worker workforce was just one way of saying 'we value you'"



No Oxford blues: top left, visiting the 'Marketplace'

- Commitment to learning—the winner for this category was Hannah Terry, who was nominated by the academy team. Hannah had amazed the academy team with her commitment to achieving her level 3 apprenticeship, despite a number of personal challenges. There were a number of runners-up in this category: Karen Follows; Myra Piorowska and Agnieszka Swejkowska, who without exception were commended by the academy team for their commitment to achieving their apprenticeships in healthcare support and who again had overcome a number of personal challenges to succeed.

The team was delighted that Liz Wright, acting chief nurse of the trust and Eileen Turner, patient representative, accepted the invitation to read out the nominations and present the prizes to the very worthy winners and runners-up.

An amazing lunch from in-house caterers Carpenter Catering was followed by the opportunity to wander around



BHCA

Winners of the poster presentation; main picture, speakers and organisers at Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust on 14 March.

the 'Marketplace' upstairs; this included representation from 3M, Huntleigh, the RCN, the Open University, Coloplast, and Ontex.

Ria Betteridge, the trust's lead tissue viability nurse, opened the afternoon's proceedings with an excellent presentation on the 'Role of the CSW in preventing pressure ulcers'. She was followed by Anna Prygodzicz, education commissioning manager at Health Education Thames Valley, who talked about the *Talent for Care* document and the national consultation underway—and what this means for clinical support staff.

Following Anna's session, a table discussion took place, which aimed to give clinical support staff the opportunity to discuss between themselves what they saw as the biggest barriers to their development, as well as the opportunity to add to the national debate about what they would like to be called as a group, building on Tanis's keynote address.

Carol Dodimead from the Open University gave a very informative presentation on the opportunities offered by the OU with regard to pre-registration nursing courses. Lynda Huard, one of the trust's dementia leaders, provided the delegates with a crucial insight into how we can improve the hospital experience of patients with dementia. Julia Buchanon, in her talk on communication, highlighted that poor communication is often at the heart of complaints and how we can learn from the complaints. We have to ensure that we get it right for our patients and their families and carers.

The day closed with two support workers, Sue Adams and Sharon Mcrae from the trauma unit within the trust, sharing their experiences of caring for patients with dementia.

Claire Wardle, Teresa Wright and Andrea Doherty spoke briefly on what the Support Worker Academy had to

offer delegates before the closing remarks offered by Sam Donohue.

The stories that many of the speakers had to tell about their experiences of providing compassionate care or their development journey were an inspiration to all, as were the support workers who were nominated by colleagues.

There was also a poster presentation, which was won by therapy assistants Marguarite Burrell and Heidi Castle. Runners-up were assistant practitioners Sally Bond and Marion Holden. The day was kindly sponsored by Bates Office Services, which also donated the prizes for the winners and provided the stationery packs for the delegates.

'Giving something back' to our support worker workforce was just one way of saying 'we value you' and from the feedback it was clear that the conference had been well received by all delegates. The team will be looking to build upon this success next year... **BJHCA**