

# England's top nurse applauds unique new recruits

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The chief nursing officer for England came to Cambridge today (Wed, 5 Feb) to congratulate 17 students who are among the first in the country to complete a ground-breaking apprenticeship degree scheme – helping to beat the national nursing shortage.



Ruth May, who is also an executive/national director at NHS England and NHS Improvement, thanked the group for their dedication during a ceremony at Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (CUH). The event coincided with National Apprenticeship Week.

Other guests there to congratulate the nurses included chair of Health Education England Sir David Behan, a former chief executive of the independent regulator, the Care Quality Commission.

The nurses, all former healthcare support workers, undertook a mix of on-the-job training on hospital wards and classroom studies at Anglia Ruskin University to earn their BSc (Hons)

## Nursing Degrees.

The Trust paid apprentices an annual wage and covered their tuition fees – giving them a unique opportunity to earn while they learn at a world-famous hospital, and sample university life

Now the Trust intends to offer 100 places per annum through the nursing apprenticeship and nursing associate apprenticeship pathways, reinforcing an ambition to home grow talent.

The scheme is just one of a number of pathways into nursing at CUH, which in the last 12 months has bucked the national trend by slashing its nurse vacancy rate from 20 per cent to just under seven. The new nurses completed their training on 12 January.

CHU chief nurse, Lorraine Szeremeta, said: “I

am delighted we have been able to support this group of dedicated individuals, all of whom were previously working with us as health care support workers. They have worked so hard to achieve their goal to become registered nurses, and I’m incredibly proud of them all.

“The feedback is that the combination of on-the-job training, classroom studies combined with a real salary and paid tuition fees is a welcome pathway into nursing and a hugely rewarding career.

“The challenge for us now is to retain this talent. We are doing this by listening to feedback, strengthening our preceptorship programmes, and mentoring schemes, and taking forward ideas from our staff to ensure they feel a valued part of CUH.

“Today was also an opportunity for us to congratulate those who successfully completed their nursing associate degrees with the Open University, which is another step on the ladder towards becoming a fully registered nurse.”

Tony Calvey, Deputy Head of School for Nursing and Midwifery, said Anglia Ruskin is one of only a handful of higher education providers offering degree apprenticeships in nursing, having started in September 2017.

He said: “We are very excited about this new pathway into nursing, which allows people who might not otherwise have chosen a career in nursing to undertake a course that suits their needs. As well as vital hands-on experience, they enjoy all the benefits of university life.

“We would all like to thank the Chief nursing officer for England and chair of Health England for joining us today and making it such an auspicious occasion.”

Among those delighted to become a registered nurse was Lauren Payne, who said of her

apprenticeship: “It gives people chance to develop and become a nurse over a longer period without the added financial pressure. It was a good way of developing and retaining staff in our department.”

Emma Burgess, who entered as a mature student, said: “It has been a life long goal. I’d advise others interested to follow their dreams.”

More than 11,000 people from 100 countries work at CUH in a wide variety of roles. Anyone interested in joining should visit the Trust’s website.