

PRESS RELEASE – 5 NOVEMBER 2018

New appointment to encourage South Tyneside and Sunderland nurses, midwives and allied health professionals to enter research to improve patient care



South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts have signalled their commitment to helping nurses, midwives and allied health professionals to make a difference through research to the patients of tomorrow by appointing Dr Yitka Graham to join their Nursing leadership team.

Her two-year post is being partly funded by the National Institute for Health Research Clinical Research Network North East and North Cumbria (NIHR CRN NENC) and the University of Sunderland, along with South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group. Her aim as Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health Professionals (NMAHP) Strategic Research Lead will be to enable these staff to develop in clinical academic roles and lead high quality research. The University of Sunderland School of Nursing

and Health Sciences, where she is Senior Lecturer in Health Services and NHS Engagement, will provide the necessary support and resource to underpin the work.

Dr Graham has worked collaboratively with the bariatric surgical unit at City Hospitals for the last six years, supporting and developing research studies. She is also the Specialty Group Lead for Health Services Research for the NIHR CRN NENC. She has experience of working with nurses, and allied health professionals such as dietitians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, podiatrists and paramedics, in her research and in her former career in the pharmaceutical industry.

Dr Graham said: "Research leads to better treatments and improved care and has the potential to be life-changing for patients. I am delighted to be given this exciting opportunity to further develop the research culture among South Tyneside and Sunderland nurses, midwives and allied health professionals. Our work will support the implementation and delivery of the NIHR CRN NENC and Health Education England North East regional strategy to develop research capacity and capability among this section of the workforce and provide structured opportunities for them to develop fulfilling careers in clinical research."

Melanie Johnson, Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals for South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts, said: "Our Trusts have an ever-growing reputation locally, nationally and internationally for ground-breaking research, in which many of our team are already involved, and there is great potential for them to contribute even more to this important field. Yitka's appointment demonstrates our commitment, along with our University of Sunderland and NIHR CRN NENC partners, to drawing on their wide-ranging skills and knowledge and their passion for innovation in improving patient care to benefit patients, clinicians and the NHS."

Professor Stephen Robson, Clinical Director for NIHR CRN NENC, said: "I'd like to offer my congratulations to Yitka; this is a fantastic opportunity to further develop NMAHP research within the rich research environment that already exists in South Tyneside and Sunderland. Engaging with NMAHPs is vital for health research and Yitka is ideally placed to facilitate this engagement and support NMAHPs involved in research."

Sue Brent, Head of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences at the University of Sunderland, said: "Congratulations to Yitka, her appointment is testament to her commitment to developing a positive research environment for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals. We are delighted to support this commitment to research leadership between the University and the NHS Trusts, which will ultimately improve patient care."

Both South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts have won many awards for their research. Earlier this year, South Tyneside was a winner in the Medilink Northern Powerhouse Healthcare Business Awards for a North East-led research partnership between the NHS, industry, academic centres and patients which is delivering high quality, world-leading, gastrointestinal endoscopy research. City Hospitals Sunderland's Research and Innovation team works in close partnership with Quality Hospital Solutions Ltd to attract funding for innovative product development and the partnership has led to the development of several successful, award-winning products and service improvements, including an air flow meter to ensure safe administration of oxygen, significantly enhancing patient safety.

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Photo caption: Left to right, Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals for South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts Melanie Johnson, new Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health Professionals Strategic Research Lead Dr Yitka Graham and Head of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences at the University of Sunderland Sue Brent

Issued by **Kay Jordan**

For press enquiries on this release, contact **0191 404 1128** or email

kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk