

PRESS RELEASE – Wednesday 12 March 2019

**South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation
Trusts inspiring the scientific workforce of the future**



Katherine Jones and Britney Jarvis are blazing a trail in the North East for female NHS Biomedical Engineering apprentices.

The pair work at South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust which, along with its partner City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust, is promoting Healthcare Science Week 2019 between March 8th-17th to celebrate and raise awareness of the many careers in Healthcare Science and inspire the scientific workforce of the future.

Both Trusts are holding careers events, in partnership with the University of Sunderland, where students at schools in South Tyneside and Sunderland can find out more about Healthcare Science careers and the university courses available.

Nineteen-year-olds Katherine and Britney are believed to be two of only three young women currently on the NHS Biomedical Engineering apprentice programme in the region. Katherine is in the third year of the four-year apprenticeship, which leads to an HNC qualification, and Britney is in the second year.

Their job involves maintaining and managing medical equipment, ranging from simple devices such as nebulisers for respiratory patients, to sophisticated technology used in patient monitoring and life support. As well as learning practical skills by working at South Tyneside District Hospital and with the Trust's community services in South Tyneside, Sunderland and Gateshead. Katherine attends Tyne Metropolitan College in North Tyneside and Britney attends South Tyneside College in South Shields one day a week where they have so far passed many subjects with distinctions and merits.

Katherine, who lives in Gateshead, said: "I did a year of sixth form but I wasn't enjoying it. My dad had joined the NHS as an electrician apprentice when he was the same age as me and that gave me the idea. I didn't know what Biomedical Engineering was but when I looked into it I thought it sounded really interesting and that it could be right for me as I like the practical side of things. It's an area of the NHS that most people aren't aware of but it is so important. We do servicing and repairs but, sometimes, it's up to us to find out what is wrong and put it right and I really enjoy that challenge."

Britney, who also lives in Gateshead, added: "I did an Electronics GCSE at school and from then on I knew this was what I wanted to do and the NHS engineering apprenticeship offered the perfect way in. I really love the job because it's so varied. Every day is different and you're constantly learning and it is very rewarding to be part of the team at South Tyneside who have been very welcoming and supportive."

Mike Cox, Head of Biomedical Engineering at South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust, said: "Katherine and Britney have fitted into the team really well and we have high hopes for them as their apprenticeships progress. Traditionally, women have not entered the field of Biomedical Engineering in great numbers but, hopefully, this is now changing. Biomedical Engineering is essential to so many health services and, with advances in technology and an ever-growing demand for cutting-edge medical equipment, it is an expanding field which presents increasing job

opportunities.”

Kath Griffin, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust’s Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, added: “We view apprenticeships as an important way of attracting excellent young people from our local communities to help us to further develop a skilled, motivated and qualified workforce.

“We are, of course, committed to providing equality of opportunity and we encourage the very best people to develop their skills with us to help improve patient care. I hope other young women will be encouraged to follow Katherine and Britney’s example and pursue NHS careers in Healthcare Science which previously they might not have considered.”

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Picture caption: Britney Jarvis, left, and Katherine Jones who are blazing a trail in the North East for female NHS Biomedical Engineering apprentices

Issued by **Kay Jordan**

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

kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk