

Chelsea Oliphant, Staff Nurse, Dunvegan Ward, Royal Hospital Children & Young People

First Steps into Research Gateway Award



Tell us a bit about yourself and your career to date

I studied at Edinburgh Napier University, and I qualified as a registered Child Health nurse in 2020. I graduated with distinction and received the class medal. I began working on the acute inpatient surgical ward at the Royal Hospital for Children & Young People in Edinburgh. I thoroughly enjoy my role in helping children and their families through what is often a very stressful time in hospital. The ward looks after children aged 0-16 from a diverse range of backgrounds. My job is incredibly fast paced, and every day is different. We look after children who have had routine surgeries to very complex conditions who require long stays in hospital.

Before I started nursing, I gained a Master of Arts in Theatre Studies from Glasgow University and worked in a variety of different roles which have included children's theatre, retail, front of house in a variety of theatres and a science centre. All my previous roles have helped to develop and shape my character into one well suited to nursing, I love the variety the job gives me and the chance for continued learning.

What is the focus of your Gateway Award?

For my Gateway Award I will be working with the Child Health team at Edinburgh Napier University and be supervised by Professor Nicola Ring.

The aim of my placement is to gain a broad understanding of nursing research from research project idea, through to developing a research proposal and conducting the research. I will work with a variety of nurse researchers at various stages in their careers and see how research teams come together and operate. I also plan to spend time at the Paediatric Clinical Research

Facility at RHCYP to see what they do and learn the difference between research nurses and nurse researchers. I'll be involved in this work from March to end August 2023.

What motivated to apply for this Gateway Award?

I was motivated to apply for a Gateway Award as since I left university, I have been interested in finding out more about research but was never sure where to start or how to gain experience whilst working full time. I have seen glimpses of research on the ward and was curious how these

projects take shape and eventually find their way into influencing clinical practises. The “First Steps into Research” award seemed like the perfect place to start as it would allow me to get my first taster into research through the allocated study days and really take those first steps into the world of research.

What are you hoping to get out of the award you have received?

I am hopeful that this experience will help me find a focus on which direction I want to take my career in. I would like to gain an understanding of how research takes shape and how this eventually can influence changes and learning in practise. Nicola and I plan to complete a systematic literature review on the history of child health nursing as our field is one of the least researched in terms of history.

I would like to go back to university in the future and complete a master’s degree so I am hopeful this award may help inspire me and could be the start of a career in the field of research.

What difference do you think having this funded support will make to your understanding of research?

The opportunity to undertake a Gateway Award whilst being funded has allowed me the chance to challenge myself and gain experience in a field I’ve never had access to before. Current demands and pressure on the NHS mean there is limited scope for protected learning time and development. This award has given me the opportunity for time to learn and grow in an area I am interested through allocated paid study days whilst continuing my work on the ward.

What do you hope to do in the future and how do you thinking this Gateway Award will help you achieve this?

My current understanding of research is very limited and as a paediatric nurse I know there is a shortage of quality child health research. My aims and aspirations for the future are to return to education and potentially pursue a masters maybe even a PhD at some point down the line. I would love to find my own area of research which I am passionate about and impact real world change for children and families. I am interested in the history of our profession, nursing wellbeing and inflammatory bowel diseases but to name a few! I am hoping these awards will help me to narrow down my focus and aspirations through having the right guidance and mentorship.

Any other thoughts?

I am extremely grateful to have been given this opportunity and incredibly proud to say I have been a part of the first cohort of Gateway Award recipients. I am excited to be working with the team Edinburgh Napier and can’t wait to get started!

For more information please contact:
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